

BANDWAGON

THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS
HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2004

Ringling Bros and Barnum & Bailey
PRESENTS

OLD KING COLE AND MOTHER GOOSE

A SPECTACULAR FANTASY

PRODUCED BY JOHN RINGLING NORTH
CREATED AND COSTUMED BY NORMAN BEL GEDDES
STAGED BY ALBERTINA RASCH

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THE FRONT COVER

The 1941 Old King Cole and Mother Goose spec was the first of the John Ringling North produced big spectacles of the Ringling-Barnum Circus.

This modernistic litho was used to advertise it.

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CHS 2004 CONVENTION

The 2004 Circus Historical Society convention will be held in Nyack, New York July 14 to 18. The convention circus will be Clyde Beatty-Cole

Bros. playing at Marine Park, in Brooklyn.

A highlight will be a day at Coney

Island with a visit to the new Coney Island Museum, the Sideshow by the Seashore and a guided walking tour.

The headquarters will be the Best Western Nyack. Nyack on Hudson, 26 Route 59, New York. Rates will be \$89 plus tax, including free parking and free continental breakfast.

The Best Western Nyack phone number is 845-388-8100, mention you want special CHS rate.

The Convention registration is \$125. Plan to attend our first East Coast gathering in years.

DUES NOTICES

The CHS dues and subscription notices for 2004 will be mailed at the end of April. Please do not send your payment to the Secretary-Treasurer before you receive your regular dues envelope.

ADDRESS CHANGES

When each issue of the *Bandwagon* is mailed a number of copies are returned by the post office due to address changes.

The post office charges \$1.65 for each copy returned. Please advise address changes in advance. Returned copies can not be replaced at no charge.

CIRCUS LETTERHEADS WANTED

Looking for any railroad shows from 1880's to 1938.

Especially looking for Ringling Bros., Buffalo Bill, and Barnum & Bailey.

Please send Xerox copy if you can.

Also looking for photos of the Ringling-Barnum Sarasota graveyard and of King Bros. in the 1950s.

J. P. Yancey
P. O. Box 1004
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Spec-ology Of The Circus

PART TWO

By Fred D. Pfening, Jr.

In 1918 the Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show on Earth opened under canvas in Brooklyn, New York, traveling on 89 cars. The Ringling Bros. World's Greatest Shows opened under canvas in St. Louis, Missouri on 89 cars.

Routing of the two circuses was a challenge as the railroads were under the control of the government due to the war conditions. It was often very difficult to move the shows from city to city. Other reasons also played a part in the decision to tour only one show in 1919. The brothers were concerned that the Ringling brothers were passing away and there was a lack of family to manage two circuses. They were also aware of increasing competition from motion pictures, and that the country could not support two giant circuses.

As the season progressed it became clear to the Ringling brothers that moving the two circuses in 1919 would be nearly impossible. The government advised the Ringlings that

Fete of the Garlands spec in Madison Square Garden. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives unless otherwise credited.

it would allow only enough engines to pull one show. Midway in the 1918 tour the Ringling show was routed to close the season in Clarksdale, Mississippi on October 18. However, the show closed in Waycross, Georgia on October 8, due to the influenza epidemic.

But for the first time in its history the show did not return to Baraboo, Wisconsin; it was sent to the Barnum winter quarters in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Following the closing stand of the Barnum show in Houston, Texas on October 8 the show was sent to winter quarters. It had been billed for ten more days but these stands were cancelled due to the influenza epidemic.

When the Ringling show did not return to Baraboo it appears that the real estate and excess equipment was just abandoned. The Bell wagon and some animals were later sent to Bridgeport. Most of the business records were left in the office building on Water Street.

Merging the two giant circuses required a massive effort. The



Various small floats used in the specs of the 1920s.

best equipment was taken from each show. Many of the rail cars were old and nearly worn out. Serious deci-





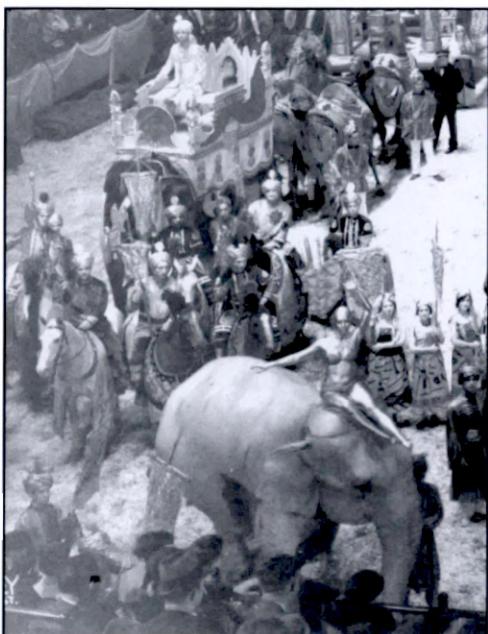
The Egypt float in a 1935 spec.

sions had to be made concerning the department bosses. The 1919 big top housed three rings and four stages leaving no room for scenery that blocked out a large part of the back-side reserved seats and was a long distance from the cheap seats in the blues.

Charles and John Ringling were the dominant force in guiding the show in a new era. They decided to parade in 1919 and in 1920.

However, the massive, themed specs of the past were not continued. Instead a tournament opening was presented that included a number of small floats from former productions. The best known of these was the Cinderella carriage used in

The gold elephant Modoc with Helen Leslie aboard in the 1933 spec Durbar of Delhi.



1919 and 1920. Another was the Egyptian-themed one that remained in use into the early 1930s. Another was the former Barnum & London Santa Claus pony float. Perhaps the oldest wagon was the 1871 Howes Great London dragon float. It was used as late as the 1930s.

In 1919 the spec was listed in the program as the Introductory Pageant.

The format was basically the same until 1924.

LeMaire created and supervised a completely new spec titled Nepal. The pageant was an introduction for the entrance of Frank Buck.

The spec opened the performance. The program told of it, "Inaugurating the pageant, a mounted herald charges forth to proclaim the entrance of the Maharajah, Seated in the royal howdah atop his state elephant, the potentate approaches, surrounded by his native princes, his guards, his mounted officers, preceded only by his crack Nepalese band, clad in black and gold. Following come the fan bearers, the parasol carriers, and the dancing



In 1925 it was called Fete of the Garlands, presenting 70 riders on horseback. In 1926 it was called Tournament and Garland entry. This format continued through the 1932 season.

In 1933, the fiftieth anniversary of the Ringling title, a real name was placed on the grand entry, The Durbar of Delhi. The feature of the pageant was Modoc and Helen Leslie, both painted gold. A special lithograph advertised the opening parade. Without the gold elephant, this title was used through the 1936 tour.

India was the spec title in 1937. A new litho advertised it. From that time on the spec title was changed each year.

John Ringling North, at age thirty-four, took control of the big one in 1938. North returned to the old style of themed opening spectacles. He hired Charles LeMaire, a Broadway designer, who had worked on George White's Scandals and the Ziegfeld Follies and had designed costumes for stage, screen and open-air spectacles.

The 1938 Nepal spec in Madison Square Garden. Ringling Art Museum collection.

girls. Then lumber along the royal elephants bearing in regal state the many Maharanees, the visiting princes and English officers, troops of Hindu horsemen-all to welcome Frank Buck, who enters in hunting garb, riding in a basket howdah on his hunting elephant. His native hunters and bearers and his Malay stalkers follow, leading and carrying wild animals captured for the circus. Then come native girls bearing bowls of strange fruits, garlands of hibiscus and wild orchids--the entire spectacle closing with squadrons of Bengal Lancers in intricate drills and maneuvers in the rings and on the hippodrome track.

The Maharajah of Nepal and his court described the spec as an enacting of the Royal welcome afforded the jungle king upon his triumphant return from Malaysian wilds. It featured "Bring 'em back alive" Frank Buck riding in a howdah on an elephant. A squadron of Bengal Lancers appeared. Later in the performance

Gargantua the Great, the giant gorilla, made a trip around the hippodrome track in an air-conditioned cage.

✓ John North's first designer was Charles LeMaire.

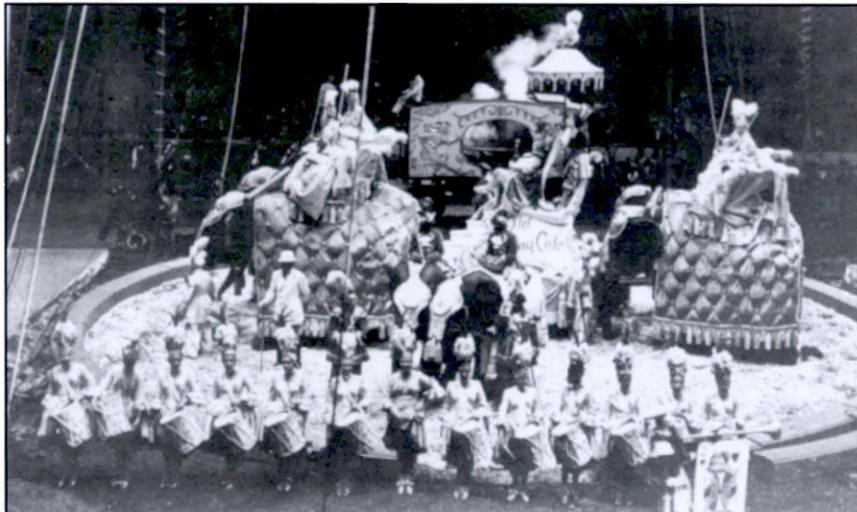
The April 16 *Billboard* included these comments on the spec:

"DISPLAY 1--INAUGURAL PAGEANT. Even in frequent program references the Big Show disdains modesty in telling the world that it is in the throes of a new era. This is evident from the first moment the show begins to the curtain closing chariot races in which Frank Asher has an unrecognized young lady as his contender. Modernization is the keyword and this is easily discerned in the streamlined character of the costuming, staging and running order of the spec, titled Nepal this year and providing an allegorical starring part for Frank Buck, recruited by the tradition blaster, John Ringling North, to give the show an added touch of glamour and another springboard on which to catapult publicity. Long famous and successful in the legitimate theater as a designer of costumes and mountings, Charles LeMaire makes his debut as a circus factor with his excellent work in creating, supervising, designing and lighting the spec, as well as lending his influence and good taste to costume designing and trappings throughout the show. One astounding result is that there is a revolutionary improvement in color blendings; eye-filling effects are frequent and there is achieved every benefit of circus sparkle and tinsel without any of the gaudiness that could be called by the name of cheap by those without a modicum of kindness. Nepal is truly a thrilling ambulant spectacle from the girls who lead the way deftly twirling batons, down through



the wild animals that are led and carried, and winding up with Buck waving greetings from his howdah, his colorful entourage and the troupe of about 50 Bengal Lancers. As the spec procession melts back into the cavernous depths of backstage the Lancers fill the hippodrome track and the outside rings, engaging in ingenious drills under the leadership of William Heyer, one of the show's equestrian professors."

The April 9 review in the *New York Times* included the following: "The audience gasped at something new in the procession for, walking along on



chain leashes held in the firm grasp of handlers, were a Bengal tiger and a snarling lion. Other animals—cheetahs, monkeys, camels, zebras, midget burros, a cinnamon bear, llamas, tropical birds, a wooly yak and miniature African elephants—also were in the parade."

Norman Bel Geddes redesigned the circus.

LeMaire was back in 1939 to create The World Comes to the World's Fair, inspired by the New York World's Fair that year. It too featured the Squadrions of Bengal Lancers as well as costumed people rep-

resenting people from various parts of the world.

The program stated, "From the far corners of the earth and near come the marching hosts. From Europe, South America, South Africa, Australia, Canada and India they bring rare objects for The World's Fair, whether mounted on elephants, gold and silver draped, a horse or on camels, in palanquins or on foot. Impressive is the cortege of the Maharajahs and Mabarnees of the British Indian empire with its famous Escort of Honor, including Squadrons of Bengal Lancers."

The *New York Sun* review of the opening appeared on April 6 and read in part, "The World Comes to the World's Fair in costumes and motif is not much different from last



The 1941 Old King Cole and Mother Goose spec with the Two Jesters caliope in background.

year, except that Frank Buck was sitting in a box seat alongside the arena instead of in a basket on an elephant."

In 1940 North had had enough of La Maire, and signed French designer Max Wely to create, costume and produce the new spec The Return of Marco Polo. Wely had designed shows for the Folies Bergere and Casino de Paris in the French capital. The program stated the trapping and costumes cost over \$80,000.

The *Variety* review said in part, "It was the longest show in six years and exited at 12:45 a.m. In color, the Ringling show has never been more attractively dressed, that going from

the opening spectacle The Return of Marco Polo. The gay tones of the costumes and the various trappings registered distinctly with the first-nighters. Six bands are used during the procession, which lasts about ten minutes.

North hired Norman Bel Geddes, of New York World's Fair Futurama fame to redesign the whole circus for the 1941 tour.

On November 4, 1940 Geddes wrote John North outlining a contract for his work for the Big Show, "This confirms the understanding that you have employed us as designers to perform the following services:

"We will perform all design services required by you for the circus from this date forward.

"We will make a study of all circus problems, wherein design to improve the visual results, or reduce the cost of the operation.

"We will prepare a program recommending how the execution of our designs be spread over several years for economic reasons.

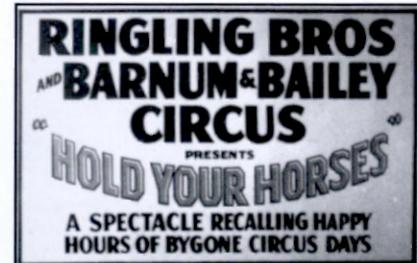
Included in the scope of this work is the design of all costumes, tents, spectators' seats, menagerie cages, wagons, a new midway, side show, concessionaire space, entrance canopy, banners, posters and signs.

"For our services you will pay us a retainer fee of \$1,000 per month, plus reimbursements for costs, not to exceed an average of \$1,500 per month. Either of us may cancel this agreement and end all obligations of each under this agreement at any time, by notice in writing to the other 60 days in advance, retainer fees are due monthly in advance, starting on the date of this agreement; costs will be billed by us and payable monthly."

The Bel Geddes staff included producer John Murray Anderson, costume designer Miles White, assistant producer Thomas Farrar and construction draftsman Walter Jaegerman. All but Jaegerman would later work directly for the circus. It is thought that one of the Geddes group came up with the term "payoff" float as the designation of the final float in the spec.

Bel Geddes designed the spec Old King Cole and Mother Goose as well as a new tent for Mr. and Mrs. Gargantua and changes in the midway, menagerie and the big top.

SPECIAL SPECTACLE LITHOGRAPHS



The 1941 spec floats were: the Bell wagon, pulled by six horses; Old King Cole, with Felix Adler; Two Jesters calliope, with a four horse hitch; Jack Sprat and Wife; Jack and Jill; The House That Jack Built and several pull carts and litters.

At a January 24 meeting with North Bel Geddes outlined some of

his plans. A report of the meeting read in part, "Everything in the circus should look as if it is happening for the benefit of Old King Cole. The Court animal act cannot be part of the King's entertainment, because it is too dominating in itself; a horse spectacle would be the same, as well as any other big arena act, except the elephants and things that have a special quality, or any period act that doesn't fit in with the Mother Goose idea. Therefore, we should start the circus with two or three obviously unrelated acts.

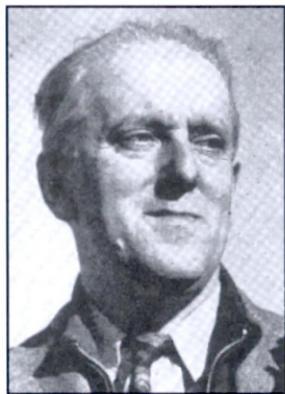
"The main reason for not wanting to start with the spec is because later we can do a spec of much more beauty, because we can then use all three rings.

"Mr. Geddes said he thought a horse number would be a very good opening. He said he would like to see a great pageant that is the equivalent of a parade, such as dressing all the horsemen like Bengal Lancers and have them do some routine.

"He asked how many horses the ring will hold. Mr. North said a lot, but that many horses will cost so much more in additional costumes that it will be like having two specs. Mr. Geddes and Mr. North agreed that if the Lancers costumes, which they already have, are in good enough condition, we won't have to make any new ones for them.

"King Cole and his Court, clowns riding on elephants, were discussed next. Mr. North was very pleased with the plans for this group, but

The Bell wagon in the 1942 spec Holidays.



said that we would send a letter to Florida quickly, with a little rough sketch of how these will work because they require howdah elephants and they must be trained soon.

"Mr. North warned that it might not be possible to have anybody ride on the pygmy elephants.

"Mr. Geddes asked if we can dress up giraffes and use them in the spec. He also asked if we could dress up ostriches like ballet girls."

John Murray Anderson.

The Old King Cole and Mother Goose spec was display number five. The program listed John Ringling North as producer, Norman Bel Geddes as creator of costumes and Alberta Rasch as ensemble arranger.

Another large production was display number 17. It was titled An Evening in Central Park and featured Roberto de Vasconcellos. A number of other riders appeared in the number.

On August 14, 1941 Geddes wrote John North, "This is to confirm the agreement reached in our recent discussion whereby it is acknowledged that we have completed all of the work for the circus assigned to us in connection with the 1941 season



The Two Jesters steam calliope in 1942.

under our contract of November 4, 1940 and that payment therefore will be completed on receipt of our retainers payments through the month of October 1941.

"We hereby agree that for the 1942 season we will perform the services listed hereunder:

1. Design of costumes and uniforms for the spectacle and various acts for the 1942 show.

2. Design and/or suggestions for the equipment used in various acts in 1942.

3. Recommendations for lighting the 1942 show.

4. Continuation of our general studies of new equipment including a sketch of the new type tent for publicity purposes.

5. Suggestions and designs for improving the various special exhibits and displays to be used with the circus in 1942.

"We agree to undertake this work for \$30,000, plus an additional sum of 10% if our costs for performing this work exceed \$15,000, to be paid as follows: \$5,000 on the signing of this agreement. \$10,000 on or before October 1, 1941, \$10,000 on or before November 1, 1941, and the balance due on or before April 1, 1942." (Author's note. \$30,000 in 1941 is over \$250,000 in today's dollars.)

On November 6, 1941 the circus signed a contract with John Murray Anderson at a salary of \$10,000. It called for Anderson's services for a total of ten consecutive weeks, beginning on or about February 2, 1942 and continuing until the end of the first week's run at Madison Square Garden. Payments were due as follows, \$1,000 on the signing of the contract, \$1,000 on December 1, \$1,000 on December 29, 1941. The balance was to be paid at the rate of





The Santa Claus float pulled by elephants in 1942.

\$700 per week, for ten consecutive weeks. Beginning on February 2, 1942.

The show agreed to employ a stage manager, an assistant and a costume designer. Anderson insisted that his name be displayed in all circus billing as large as any other person connected with the presentation of the circus, excepting the name of John Ringling North.

Bel Geddes created the 1942 spec called Holidays. John Murray Anderson who staged the pageant, joined him. It presented the festive gayety from New Year to Christmas. Anderson also staged a clown number, The Ballet of the Elephants, and Fiesta Del Torres, a large horse number featuring Robert De Vasconcellos. George Balanchine directed the elephant number and Igor Stravinsky composed the music for the elephants.

The 1942 floats included the Bell wagon with icicles, pulled by four horses; Halloween; Santa Claus, pulled by four elephants; Blarney Stone; Christmas Sleigh, pulled by eight elephants; Two Jesters calliope; Gorilla's Wedding Cake, pulled by four horses; Christmas; Thanksgiving; Water Wagon (New Years); Easter and St. Patrick's carts; Shamrock Planter Cart; Valentine 1; Valentine 2; and Liberty Bell (July 4).

The Mexican Hat float in 1943.



"The elephants were covered with blue spangled howdah clothes and bore the names of the reindeer of 'Twas the Night Before Christmas' Beautiful girls, in white, swayed on their backs.

"At the end of

the pageant came with a forty-foot sleigh in brave red and snow white. Midgets dressed in green velvet and red velvet crawled all over it and a potbellied Santa Claus, dressed in red velvet, waved at the children in the audience.

"Just before the exit, artificial snow fell from the Garden's rafters, turning in the blue light as if under a winter moon. The hidden circus band swelled with triumphal brasses and all but drowned the chimes and sleigh music with the notes of Jingle Bells."

The April 18 *Billboard* had this to say, "So this year it's a combination of the holdover innovations of Bel Geddes and the new regime of Anderson, but, to judge by some the touches introduced, the later has been listened to. There are dashes of unadulterated corn, but only critical sophisticates, self-styled or pure, can count them, and the point isn't important. The spec is Holidays, a run through from January 1 to December 25, conceived by Bel Geddes and staged by Anderson. Nice floats here with swell garments and it won't lack devotees. Big scene is the windup Christmas sleigh drawn by eight bulls with Felix Adler aloft on the driver's seat."

The Two Jesters calliope was decorated with panels reading Happy New Year. The Bell wagon sides were covered with icicles.

On September 11, 1942 Geddes wrote to John North, "Miles [White] and I have agreed upon the following terms:

"An increase of \$500 over last year which would make his salary, covering his work for the circus, \$2,500. In addition I am to pay his expenses, not to exceed two weeks, in Sarasota including his transportation.

"Also I am recommend to you that his credit be advanced from the rear of the program to the front. I told him I would be delighted to do this but only under the condition that Mr. North would agree to advance the credits of Farrar and Jaegerman also.

"Miles made it clear that he was accepting this under the condition that Brooks compensated him additionally for other work he would be able to do if he was not working on the circus.



The new Liberty bandwagon in 1943. Robert Sabia collection.

"The circus will look no different whether we use Miles or other people to make the costume drawings any more than if we lost Walter Jaegerman who makes the property and float drawings.

"After all it was I who found Miles and gave him his first job and the same can be said of a lot of other people. But the important thing is that we have never yet failed to deliver, and whatever our value is as a design organization is not dependent upon individual employees."

The annual meeting of the circus board of directors was held on January 7, 1943. John Ringling North was ousted as president of the

A walking group of girls in the 1944 Panto's Paradise spec.



company. Robert Ringling was placed in the catbird's seat as the new president.

The circus fans got a break with the 1943 spec and children saw something that they had never seen before, an old time street parade. It was titled Hold Your Horses.

John Murray Anderson staged the performance, Max Weldy was production manager and Vander Barbette joined the show as aerial director.

The spec was moved back to start the performance. The Anderson-staged tournament included horse drawn cages and the Two Jester calliope. A new bandwagon was built for the "parade."

The spec consisted of: Introduction; Two horse buggy with Fred Bradna at the reins; Five riders with banners; Liberty bandwagon, six horse hitch with Merle Evans and his band atop; Two riders and flags; Clown police patrol wagon; Cage No. 71-two artists on top, 4 horse hitch; Eight riders, with banners; Cage No. 95-4 horse hitch; Elephant with howdah; Cage No. 77-two elephant hitch, with four people on top; Two camels with riders; Bareback rider on white horse; Donkey and Clown; Cage No. 73-4 horse hitch, clown band on top; Two riders; Cage No. 75 two-elephant hitch Four actors on

top; Two-horse riders; Old Dog and Pony Wagon (1884) Four Shetland Pony hitch; Cage No. 70 two-horse hitch; Two four horse chariots with riders-Old Roman type; Eight riders; Five elephants; Two Jesters calliope.

The old clarion Bell wagon was not used that year. The new Liberty bandwagon was beautiful with very good carvings, with some from old parade wagons. There was a door in the rear to store props.

A second large production number was titled Let Freedom Ring.

In 1944 the Panto's Paradise was moved to display number seven. The April 8 *Billboard* published an article about the preview in Sarasota on March 26. It read in part, "Top-billed, and rightly so is Panto's Paradise, middle of the show spec, which over shadows all previous spec for costumes and grandeur. Featuring the



The Panto's float pulled by elephants.

clown Emmett Kelly, Paradise is a dream of a hobo in fairyland with beautiful girls in fantastically beautiful costumes. Four new floats, each of which is a whole show in its own right, will one day equal in fame such old-timers as the Four (sic) Hemisphere series and Liberty bandwagon drawn by 20 elephants. Kelly and the girls loll on a cloudlike pink float festooned with jewels and spangles. At the tail end is a two-wheeled trailer with one of the Doll family in angel costume on a pink cloud.

"The ballet, done by Lauretta Jefferson, assisted by Robert Ringling, is magnificent. Dance of the Seven Viels, Rockette-style chorus in checkerboard velvets of orange, yellow, purple, red and green, with ostrich plumage fore and aft, brings one back into the Ziegfeld heyday.



The Five Graces bandwagon, the Lion and Snake, Lion and Gladiator and tableau wagons used in the 1945 spec.

Acclaimed by audience, raved about by the press and bragged about by all circus hands, Paradise is truly the spec it is billed to be."

The *New York Times* reviewed the performance on April 6. It said in part, "The evening's eye-dazzler was 'Panto's Paradise.' A new and fanciful funfest, lavishly garnished with unprecedented color, beauty and splendor, featuring the world famous prince of pantomime, Emmett Kelly, the clown with the sad face. They went to town on this one. Kelly found himself in the center ring, fast asleep. Then unfolded his dream in the shape of dancing girls, picturesque floats, dancing elephants, prancing horses, and you guessed it—Kelly, himself, the tattered clown, receiving the tributes of all."

Bob Ensworth wrote the *White Tops* review. "Panto's Paradise, featuring the prince of pantomime, newly-wed Emmett Kelly, is next. As gorgeous a spec as the Ringling show has ever sent parading—and that's saying plenty! Cleverest touch in the parade, to this writer, was Lou Jacobs and Ernestine Clarke. Lou is presenting the Percheron-perched lovely with a rose, duplicating the famous circus picture, which forms

The Toy Train in the 1946 spec.

the cover of this year's Big Show program.

"We'll let the final float be a memorable surprise. It's an elephant hitch affair that best be described by

reporting merely that it tops the Old King Cole wagon and even Santa Claus of Holiday fame."

The 1945 spec was titled Alice in Circus Wonderland. The *Billboard* review reported, "The spec closed the first half of the show. When they finally did give it to them, really was something to behold. All through the show the costuming was such that it rated the superlatives tossed about by reviewers for the New York dailies, and there is no question but that the bulk of the audience never before had lamped the famous Five Graces bandwagon, loaded up with capering, monkey-costumes, the four

tableau wagons representing the Toad Stool, the Iceberg with the Sea-Lion and Penguin, the (Two Jesters) calliope, the pony-drawn cross-cage carrying Humpty-Dumpty and the other highly burnished tableau wagons with four-horse hitches, and the illuminated water-spouting float that carried Alice to her Circus Wonder-land. Few were sitting on their hands when after midnight, but 20 minutes was cut from the running time at Thursday's matinee by the elimination of the War Bond speech, which was scheduled for the first night only, and a little tightening here and there."

Also included in the spec were the Toad and Mushroom; Five Graces bandwagon; the Lion and Gladiator;

the Lion and Snake tableau wagon; the Swan Boat; and the small Harp and Jesters air calliope wagon.

George Brinton Beal wrote the *White Tops* review, "Display 8 douses the lights again to spotlight Alice, in the cute person of Marion Morgan, and her 'Wonderful' companion, the Mad Hatter, the Rabbit and Emmett Kelley representing the circus world, Alice announces it is time to 'speak of other things, including cabbages and kings,' which is the case for the entrance of the major spec, Alice in Circus Wonderland in part, at least, characters of Alice in Wonderland fame. It also includes three famous old circus wagons, minus, however, the old sunburst wheels and neatly shod with rubber. In place of the old-time jester's steam calliope of last season, a modernized one is used. The famous Bell wagon is also missing. The most important of the wagons is the famous Five Graces bandwagon, now carrying a band of imitation monkeys.



The Toy Bucket float in the 1946 spec.

"Special music by Deems Taylor, who conducted the number on opening night, is provided. The music is slowly paced and rather on the tinkley side for circus atmosphere."

In 1946 Toyland was the spec. The program listed, "Staged by Robert Ringling, Billy Livingston, costume designer and Robert Barnhart, technical director."

Included in the spec were the Toyland Express Train, engine powered by a Caterpillar tractor, Engine, House, Girls, cage, Girls, House, Caboose; Princess Barge, pulled by four horses. Harp and Jesters air calliope, Bell wagon, Pail of Toys, pulled by an elephant hitch; Doll House and Jack In The Box.

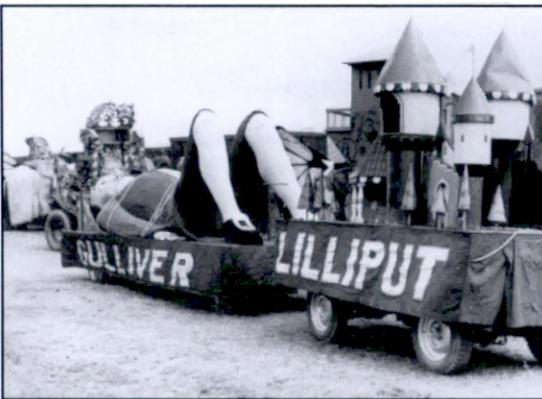
Once Upon A Time, The Wedding



Of Cinderella was the title of the 1947 spec. John North was returned as the control of the circus and he brought back John Murray Anderson and Miles White to produce and design the spec. The choreography was by Esther Junger.

The floats were The Wedding Book, in center ring; Slipper; Fairy Godmother; the Bell wagon; pulled by six horses; Hansel and Gretel; Lilliputian on a Jeep; Gulliver; Harp and Jester air calliope, pulled by two horses; Wizard Of Oz; Aladdin cart; Sleeping Beauty; small Cinderella Carriage; Cinderella's Golden Chariot (payoff) pulled by an elephant and several small carts and litters.

The April 10 *New York Times* reviewed the performance. It read in part, "For all ages there was the



The Gulliver and Lilliput floats in the 1947 spec.

payable in \$2,000 installments through May 7, 1948. At circus' expense he was to have a stage manager and an assistant dance director.

On October 28, 1947 John Ringling North returned to the helm, having bought 51% of the stock in the circus, with the help of a \$100,000 loan from Arthur M. Concello. The show was playing Atlanta, Georgia at the time. To make it formal North was elected president at a board meeting in Sarasota on November 15, 1947. Henry North was elected vice-president and Robert Ringling was elected chairman of the board. Pressed to cut expenses North cut the train from 107 cars to 90.

In 1948 the big show featured Twas The Night Before Christmas, described in the program as "The Never-to-be-Forgotten pageant in which Santa Claus brings toy land and the symbols of Christmas to life, love and laughter." The John Murray Anderson, Miles White and Esther Junger team were again the creators.

The floats were Toy Circus Calliope; Music Box; Noah's Ark; Jack In The Box; Good Little Girl, in center ring; Jaunting cart; Small covered wagon; the Bell wagon; and the Snow Queen, payoff float.

The *New York Times* review

commented, "Blue lights filled the Garden. There was a blast of music and the great doors at the east end of the arena swung open. Out came the storybook procession. There was Peter Rabbit and his family, followed by that awful Mister McGregor. There were scores of pretty girls dancing along to the tune of Jingle Bells. There was Louisa May Alcott's famous quartette, Beth, Amy, Meg and Jo, strolling in red and white checked gingham gowns. There was Scrooge and Tiny Tim and all the rest. There were elephants with Christmas trees growing on their backs. John Ringling North, president of the circus, had tried to get reindeer to pull Santa Claus' sleigh, but the government wouldn't let them into the country because of the danger of hoof-and-mouth disease.

"But the circus was not stumped. When Santa Claus appeared last night, his sleigh was drawn by eight ponies, and to the head of each pony was affixed a large and satisfying pair of white antlers.

"As the spectacle moved through the haze, snow began to fall. The white flakes drifted down into the arena and settled over the moving figures. Some remembered that it was April and that it was really white confetti, but for my money it was snow. A person would be a fool to believe otherwise."

The *White Tops* review by wordsmith Bill Montague noted, "Twas

The Snow Queen float in the 1948 spec. Ringling Museum of Art collection.



The Night Before Christmas was programmed, the huge, humorous radiant holiday spectacle. And it fulfilled that word picture. Staged by the well-known John Murray Anderson, it ran about 15 minutes. It is a natural for the youngsters, but will be enjoyed by the oldsters as well. Santa enjoyed by the oldsters as well. Santa Claus was lowered from the dome of the Garden, after which he took part in a sequence in one of the rings. Making up the procession, that slowly wended its way around the hippodrome track, were a number of beautiful floats, adorned with girls. There were mounted men and women, some of the former garbed as Christmas tree ornaments, a group of pony-drawn miniature cages, one containing a dog. A mechanical train, the Bell wagon, a giraffe, a pigmy hippo and a giant snowman were part of it.

"The Monte Carlo Aerial Ballet, directed by Barbette, was well done. There were about 40 lovely girls aloft, attired in vivid red and black costumes. The display featured Chrysis De La Grange in a center cloud swing."

Birthdays was the title of the 1949 spec. On November 26, 1948 Arthur Segal, president of Studio Alliance, proposed this cost estimate for the 1949 spec floats: Birthday Card float, \$3,500; Theme float, \$6,900; Little Miss Muffet float, \$6,400; Tulip Time float, \$4,800; Gargantua Float, \$6,650; Mothers Day float, \$3,300; Titania's Bower float, \$5,850; Bugs Bunny Hollywood Baby float, \$7,800; Jack O'Lantern float, \$3,500; Currier and Ives float, \$2,500; Giant Cracker float, \$3,350 and Payoff float, to include sound and light effects to simulate a rocket ship, \$9,500. Total \$66,750. Some these were not made.

A final 1949 float list included Titania's Bower; Happy Birthday in Tulip Time; Small Swan Sleigh; Small Chariot; Hay Wagon Trampoline; Old Lady In A Shoe; Father's Day/Birthday, on Jeep; Mother's Day/Birthday, on Jeep; the Bell wagon; Good Little Girl, on Jeep; 50th Anniversary Tab wagon; Thanksgiving; three small aluminum



The Happy Birthday in Tulip Time float used in 1949. Dom Yodice collection.

cages and the Rocket ship payoff float.

The *New York Daily Mirror* commented, "North, designer Miles White and John Murray Anderson employ a patriotic motif for the big show this season: red, white and blue. The finale is The Glorious Fourth, dedicated to the people of the United States of America and to all free people of the earth—in the struggle to maintain their way of life against world aggressors."

"Other gorgeous specs this year are Birthdays, A Musical Horoscope and San Francisco."

The *New York Times* review commented, "The program aptly noted that Birthdays was a musical horoscope, in which the natal days of all the beloved characters in Mother Goose verse, fairy tails and nursery rhymes are merrily celebrated in fabulous fancy, in rainbow radiance,

opulence and with all hearts high. And so it was as these characters paraded around the hippodrome track. And weaving in and out was Emmett Kelly, the Big Show's sad-faced clown—but beaming broadly this time."

John Murray Anderson signed his final contract with the circus on June 14, 1949. His total salary was \$20,000.

In 1950 the spec was called When Dreams Come True. It was staged by John Murray Anderson; designed by Miles White; and choreographed by Richard Barstow. This was the first season for Barstow.

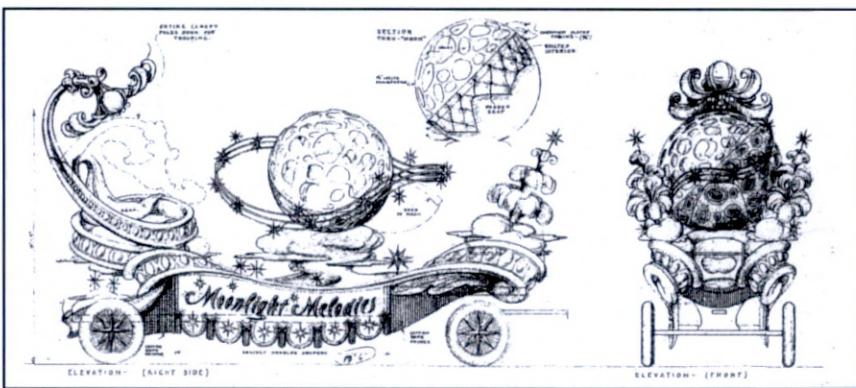
As usual the planning for the 1950 spec began in 1949. On July 22, 1949 Henry North wrote Miles White, "I wrote Murray Anderson the other day, asking him to have you get us at least rough sketches of next year's floats at the earliest possible moment, hoping that we would receive at least part of them by the time we get to Chicago.

"Today I am in receipt of a wire from Murray stating that you are unable to do anything further until you get the okay from your Union. Please let me know right away what this means. I thought you and John and Murray were set as to the execution of all next year's production numbers.

The Candy Land float used in 1950. Robert Sabia collection.



DEVELOPMENT OF A SPEC FLOAT



At top is Miles White's original concept of the Moonlight Melodies float for the 1951 spec. In the middle is the final version of Walter Jagerman construction drawing. The finished float is at the bottom. Drawings from the Dominic Yodice collection.

"Because of uncertain business conditions and marked falling off of our attendance and receipts during the past several weeks, we must conserve our cash to assure the safety factor for continuing operations. The

terms of your contract have been approved and our only desired modification of past practices regarding this contract with you is that we are to defer the payments until such a time as we are sure that no cata-

strophic business decline will catch us with a depleted treasury. In other words, your full payment is assured but we don't want to lay out the actual cash at this time."

The spec was display number six. The 1950 floats were: Sleeping Beauty; Candy Cane; Sea Serpent, on Jeep; Pop Up Dream Book, in center ring; Picture Frame, on Jeep; the Bell wagon; Harp and Jester air calliope, used in Garden dates only and the payoff, Ship with Mermaids.

The *New York Daily Mirror* review read in part, "The specs this year are When Dreams Come True, a gorgeous fantasy replete with a storybook and comic-strip characters; and Jungle Drums, a colorful safari without the dangers of the tsetse fly or a stray boa constrictor. It's an expedition that can be enjoyed in solid comfort.

"North has spent a sizable fortune on costumes this year, and designer Miles White has outdone himself. They are marked by opulence and taste. The arena color scheme is blue, white and gold, with green tanbark."

The *New York Tribune* review stated, "Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey opened last night in Madison Square Garden with a plunge into the psyche of childhood. Featuring a mighty spectacle called When Dreams Come True, the circus presented such things as a forest of ten-foot candy canes, massed amiable sea serpents with pretty girls riding on their heads, a friendly dragon twenty feet long and a cat taking a cat nap.

"Famous cartoon characters came to life in this dream parade and Wynken, Blynken and Nod were there dosing away in big wooden shoes. For a while the procession took on a historical aspect, with George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson and Theodore Roosevelt riding in quick succession. The rear of the procession was brought up in a dreamboat with silvery sails and midget playing a harp in the bowsprit. For those unfamiliar with dream boats it is well to mention that the craft was pulled by three elephants."

Bill Montague's *White Tops* review noted, "Probably the best of the years that have present type of presentations have used, is the super-specta-

cle When Dreams Come True. Something that will please them from nine to ninety and two to toothless. In it there are such things as 10-foot candy canes; a friendly 20-foot long; Jiggs and Magge of cartoon fame, and a historical angle with George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson and Theodore Roosevelt riding by.

"Seville, with sixty talented señoritas aloft. And a new twist they played marimbas while up there. This featured Pinito Del Ora.

"Old Vienna, a horsey number, with many old time rigs; a congress of famed dressage and high school riders and featured Luciana and Freidel; Claud Valois and Cilly Feindt.

"Jungle Drums a standout finis featuring the elephant herd."

Robert Sabia, a student of Ringling specs, when asked about his rating of various years commented, "I am inclined to favor the 1950 When Dream Come True, particularly when coupled with the closer Jungle Drums. The two specs came from different parts of the spectrum but somehow seemed to me to encompass the entire performance. The payoff float of the sailing ship was original in all regards and the costuming was bright, cheerful and elaborate. I rank the 1955 spec and overall costuming to follow closely behind with perhaps the colors being the best ever presented. Of Course, 1941's Old King Cole was just as great but has to pay the price of being a spec unto itself.

"My least favorite spec (and indeed overall performance) was 1948's Twas the Night before Christmas. My feeling was 'Why bother.' I could see nothing particularly interesting about the entire presentation. It certainly ranks below 1947 in terms of concept, which wasn't such a high standard, and totally lacked the imagination and foresightedness of others that followed."

Circus Serenade was the name of the 1951 spec, again staged and designed by John Murray Anderson and Miles White.

The spec order was: Emmett Kelly & Otto Griebling around the



The American Beauties float used in the Circus Serenade 1951 spec.

track (with Harold Ronk-Garden only).

Opening Section

Musical Notes riders (horses 3 brown, 2 dpl., 2 white, 1 black) in rings 1 & 3. Eight men.

CIRCUS BROADCASTING STUDIO (jeep) with Albert White as the Prima Donna

Clown Giraffe (w/antenna) Two men.

Record Changer (clown) One man.

Lou Jacobs (with drum & concertina). Clown (with saxophone).

Sing A Long Clowns (with Irv Romig) Three men.

Clown (with accordion)

Record Changer (clown)

Drum Major (Jimmy Armstrong)

CALLIOPE (2 white horses) with

The Barber Shop Quartette float on a Jeep in 1951.



Felix Adler as the Mastero (includes Rose Romig & Hilda Alzana) (driver is in red) Four women.

Prince-Herald (brown horse) One man.

Four Seasons (with harps) Spring-Summer-Autumn-Winter. Four women.

Disney Section

Bambi (burro) with attendant (red and silver).

Dumbo (baby African elephant) with attendant (red & silver)

Three Little Pigs. Three men.

Mickey Mouse

Donald Duck

Pluto

Alice (Dita Chaludi)

March Hare

Mad Hatter

Turn Of The Century Section

Clown on bicycle (with dummy).

SMALL BUGGY (Palomino horse)

2 clowns - 1 as a female with parasol.

MIDGET CAR - midget clown driver and Daisy Doll.

Dancing Girls - 4 with large hoop skirts & fans.

MOONLIGHT MELODIES float (2 white horses), (Emma Castro) as Goddess (driver is in purple).

Dancing Girls - 3 with large hoop skirts & fans (includes Elsie Jung). Six women.

Nursery Rhymes Sect-ion

Giant Mother Goose (clown)

Three Blind Mice (with cups).

Three men.

Old Mother Hubbard & dog (Buzzie Potts).

Stephan Foster Section

BARBERSHOP QUARTETTE float on Jeep (with Paul Jung & clown). Three men.

Sweet Adeline and Beau - (Ernie Burch with fan & Prince Paul with banjo).

Barbershop Quartette - 4 clowns walking 4 abreast.

Dancing Girls - 1 w/hoop skirt & 1 as cowboy w/banjo

OH SUSANNA COVERED WAGON float (2 black ponies) as above except girl holds rifle - (Mary Jane Miller & Rusty Parent).

Dancing Girls - 2 with hoop skirts & 2 as cowboys with banjos.

Old Hillbilly Clown (with jug).

Mammy & Pappy Yokum (Rose & Pete Hanlon).

Daisy Mae & Lil Abner (Peggy Day Porter & ?)

South American Section

Gauchos - riders 4 abreast (horses-2 Palomino, 1 dapple & 1 brown).

4 Bullfighters -single file.

CARRIAGE (2 white horses)-Señorita & Bullfighter (Pinito del Oro and Juan de la Fuentes husband) (driver is in red).

Male Dancer (with feathered staff & birds) (Duane Thorpe).

South American Fireflies (includes Dolly Copeland). Twelve girls.

Señorita rider (brown horse)-(Friedal Pastuer).

Circus Section

Jester Sword Swallower (clown).

Siamese Twins- Clown faces. Two women.

Fat Lady Clown. One man.

HARP and JESTERS AIR CAL-LIOPE (2 white horses) in Garden dates only (driver is in pink),

Stilt Walker Clown (Harry Dalbeanie).

English Clown with 2 dogs as miniature elephants (Charlie Bell).

Dance Hall Clown.

Dance Hall Midgets (Tiny and Gracie Doll).

Americana Section

Cowboys-riders (horses-white, brown, Palomino, dpl. gray)-Alberto Zoppe on brown.

AMERICAN BEAUTIES float (2 white horses) (Delores Murphy on left, Lucy Chaludi on right. Driver is in green.

Cowboys - riders (horses, 2 Palominos, black, brown). Four men.

Christmas Section

Christmas Trees & Gifts (green & burgundy) (with Pat Warner & Gena Moroski).

Princess rider w/wings (brown horse).

Christmas Trees & Gifts (red & green). Two men and two women.

Princess - rider with wings (brown horse).

Christmas Trees and Gifts (blue and red). Two men and two women.

Christmas Queen in wreath (elephant) (with Arky Scott & ?).



The Fountain Of Youth float in the 1952 spec. Robert Sabia collection.

BELL WAGON (2 elephants) with clown bell ringer & brakeman (aqua) plus 2 elephant handlers (aqua). Four men.

Elephant Princesses (3 elephants with winged blankets) with Jeannie Sleeter on 2nd elephant and Jean Davis on 3rd elephant) plus 3 elephant handlers (aqua).

CHRISTMAS QUEEN Anne Mace as Queen and Cucciola as midget Santa plus 2 tree holders (red & lilac) & brakeman (aqua). Four men and one woman.

The floats were: Payoff float #1; Payoff float #2; Broadcast float #3; Barber Shop Quartette float #4; Calliope float #5; American Beauties float #6; Moon float #7; and Moon float #8.

Richard Barstow joined the show in 1952.

Studio Alliance, Inc. of New York again built the floats for the 1951 spec. In an October 24, 1950 letter to Henry Ringling North the builders' Arthur Segal provided the estimated cost for the new floats. Broadcasting, mounted on Jeep, \$3,700; Barbershop, on Jeep, \$3,700; Calliope, \$4,500; American

Beauties, \$8,600; Moon, \$9,500; and Payoff, \$9,500. Total \$42,000.

The letter added, "Please note that we are not planning to use any part of the existing floats as we did last year (except for the Jeep basic platforms), which, of course, accounts for the increase over last year's estimate."

On November 2, 1950 Henry North wrote to Studio Alliance saying, "I think Miles' (White) sketches are terrific.

"The total price isn't too far out of line from the budget figure I have set for the Studio Alliance cost."

The *New York Daily Mirror* review mentioned, "The spec this year is Circus Serenade, a delightful and opulent parade of cartoon characters and storybook figures to beloved American folk music.

"The color scheme is blue and gold, with purple tanbark. The costumes by Miles White are stunning, and the staging by John Murray Anderson is expert."

Bill Montague's *White Tops* review of the show noted, "Circus Serenade is the new musical super-spectacle based on popular songs over a long period of the country's history. There is fantasy, beauty, humor, unprecedeted splendor, flamboyant color and brilliant accouterments. As the spec nears the close the Garden darkened and there is a heavy fall of artificial snow. They then sing White Christmas as a closing number. And Emmett Kelly to keep warm in this winter atmosphere builds a small fire in front of the center ring and starts to warm his hands.

"Picnic in the Park, an extraordinary equestrian fete, which features in the rings three matched groups of unbridled liberty horses and on the hippodrome track the world renowned Haute Ecole and dressage riding stars—Franz Acker, also Luciaba and Freidel. The theme song is A Picnic in the Park.

"Luawana, an enchanting new Hawaiian hula, featuring Pinito del Ora, beautiful swinging trapeze star, with a ballet of 60 lovelies above, who finish their routines playing on xylophones. The ballet was trained and directed by Antoinette Concello.



"Popcorn and Lemonade, with a theme song of the same title. It is described this way in the program: breath-taking circus day jamboree, animating in never-to-be forgotten excitement and beauty, the grand finale of the 1951 edition."

John Murray Anderson was not a part of the Ringling-Barnum circus in 1952. The Good Old Times spec was staged by Richard Barstow. His sister Edith Barstow joined the show to do the choreography. Miles White continued as designer. The spec was moved to display number three. It was described in the program as "A nostalgic musical treat, lavishly garnished with unprecedented humor, fantasy and splendor for children of both sexes an all ages from toddlers to venerables."

The 1952 floats were: the Bell wagon, used only early in the season; Cleopatra and Mark Anthony; Pocahontas and John Smith; Trojan Horse, on Jeep; Helen of Troy; Fountain of Youth; Wine Glass, payoff float; two carriages; a small Cannon; small Chariot and small Midget Car.

Bill Montague wrote of the 1952 performance in the *White Tops*, "There are four new musical spectacles this season—The Good Old Times, Butterfly Lullaby, Madri Gras and Gold Dollar Moon. The music is by John Ringling North, lyrics By E. Ray Goetz, and the choreography by Edith Barstow. The Good Old Times is the show's new super-spectacle for 1952. The 5-star display has everything—and we mean just that—and tops any spec of past years and will be one that will click strong with the patrons. There is fantasy, beauty, humorous appeal, unprecedented splendor, jangle of excitement, brilliant accoutrements, and it was elevating in effect and breathtaking. In it appear figures of Cleopatra and Mark Anthony, Henry the Eighth and his wives, Lady Godiva, Helen of Troy, King Arthur's Knights, Robin Hood and his Merrie Men, Christopher Columbus and his crew, Ponce de Leon, Men from Mars, to mention a few. It was decorated with scores of attractive girls attired in rich and colorful costumes. There were some giant figures of swans and lobsters riding on elephants. The pro-

cession proceeded around the arena on a carpet of green sawdust. As it reached its peak with music and song at a loud tempo, soap bubbles began floating down from aloft. The bubbles were made electrically operated machines, 18 were located near the ceiling, and each pumped out about 10,000 bubbles a minute, which filled the darkened Garden from ceiling to sawdust. It was a smash finish, which had the Garden cheering. Featured song—*Some Day, Today Will Be the Good Old Times*.

"The Butterfly Lullaby starring Pinito Del Oro, Spain's daring queen of the swinging trapeze, and with an exquisite ballet of lovely lassies aloft, mostly on swinging ladders. Antoinette Concello, the circus' aerial director, trained the ballerinas. Featured song: *Butterfly Lullaby*.

"Mardi Gras was the Big Show's salute from saddle to King Rex and his Merry Court. It was a surpassingly colorful cavalcade in the gay mood of the Crescent City's famous festive event, presenting the most outstanding display of super-horsemanship in amusement annals, featuring Robert de Vasconcellos, Visconde da Barca, the greatest dressage rider on earth. Appearing also in this superb exhibition were Franz Ackeri, internationally master of dressage; Lucinda and Freidel, stellar dressage equestriennes; and a



The Cleopatra and Mark Anthony float in the 1953 spec. Dom Yodice collection.

congress of other famous dressage and high school riders, beautiful belles, blooded horses, tally-hos, coaches-and-fours and other smart equipages. Featured song: *New Orleans, the Mardi Gras and You*.

"Gold Dollar Moon was the grand finale. Featured song: *Gold Dollar Moon* (kick those clouds away). An especially pleasing feature was when Merle Evans and his band marched in, garbed in bright uniforms, playing old time tunes such as *Wait Until the Sun Shines Nellie*.

All the performing personnel took part, which brought a mass of color to the arena. Center ringed was Daredevil Connely, The Man in the Moon. It was a rousing, breathtaking and sensationally spectacular finale to the 1952 edition of The Greatest Show on Earth."

Miles White designed the costumes for the Greatest Show on Earth

The 1952 payoff float was called Wine Glass. Robert Sabia collection.





The Candyland float in the 1953 spec. Dom Yodice collection.

movie in 1952 and received an Oscar nomination for this work.

The same Barstow-White production team produced the 1953 spec Candy Land.

The floats were: Tally-Ho with Buffalo Bill and Annie Oakley; Show Boat; Candyland; Little Red Schoolhouse, pulled small outhouse with Lou Jacobs; Memory Ship, on Jeep; Wizard of Oz; small metal cage and the Unicorn, as payoff.

The *White Tops* review by Bill Montague stated, "As in the last few years there are four new musical spectacles—Candy Land, new super spectacle of 1953. In it were elephants, dressed as swans, and there were others that represented famous pirates such as Captain Kidd and Long John Silver. There was a Mississippi showboat pulled by horses, and there were characters from fiction including Huck Finn and the Tin Woodman. Song—*Gone Are The Days*. Minnehaha, the aerial spec, features the beautiful star of the swinging trapeze—Pinito Del Oro, whose daring routines had the close attention of the customers.

"Derby Day Honeymoon is the horsy spec, done in the gay mood of Kentucky's famous annual racing classic. It featured Robert de Vasconcellos, the greatest dressage rider on earth, also, Marion Seifert, stellar dressage equestrienne, and Erike de Vasconcellos, renowned mistress of dressage. In this spec there are beautiful belles, blooded horses and smart equipages, including tally-hos and coaches-and-fours.

"Americana, U. S. A., was the sawdust treat of the evening bringing to a close the 1953 Big One performance. Merle Evans and his band marched in attired in brightly colored uniforms. Three platforms of 10 girls each were hoisted up about 30 feet and then cover cloths were dropped revealing large American flags, to add to the picture about 12 elephants formed the long mount."

In 1954 the Barstows and Miles White produced a spec titled Dreamland.

The train loading list to New York in 1954 listed the following spec floats: Merry-Go-Round float, Twelve girls float, Frog float (on Jeep), Tulip float, Elevator float, Swing float; Old King Cole; Sleeping Beauty; Scheherazade; and Calliope on Jeep.

The spec was moved to near the middle of the performance as display No. 15. Dreamland was described in the program as "A stupendous new musical super-spectacle blending Arabian nights with fairyland in a fabulous fantasy of rainbow radiance."

Bill Montague's *White Tops* review commented, "The second of the production numbers—Display 15—which was followed by a short intermission—was titled Dreamland. It included characters from the land of make-believe, such as Humpty Dumpty, Cinderella, Mother Hubbard, Little Bo Peep, Little Red Riding Hood. Floats, horses, elephants were included in this number along with many brightly costumed performers. As a climax machines in the top reaches of the Garden showered thousands of tiny bubbles down on this palpitating pageant of pulchritude, pantomime. Audience reaction was strong.

"Third of the production numbers—Display 22—was Fiesta, the horsy number, presented in a

Mexican atmosphere, a riot of color and gaiety. Guadalupe Partida and his group of wildly riding Charro rope spinners, while standing on their horses, were reminiscent of the Wild West show of bygone days.

"Fourth and closing Display 26 was the Circus Climax Colossal titled—U.N. It was the best finale in some years. There were huge globes raised over the end rings with the flags of the United Nations streaming from them. One of the highlights was a group of Drummer Girls, costumed in blue and white, and led by a majorette, a cute package, who gave an excellent exhibition of twirling. A three-part curtain depicted President Eisenhower as a West Point cadet, 5-star general, and as president. It was raised above the center ring. Merle Evans and his band leave their stand and play in the center ring. A group of elephants, with a colorful garbed girl on each, come in on the track, and at the climax of the number they form the long mount. At the conclusion the band marched to one end of the arena where in line form they played while the vast throng faded into the land of reality—New York City—on a chill March night."

On November 28, 1954 Max Weldy made this proposed list of people required for the 1955 spec.

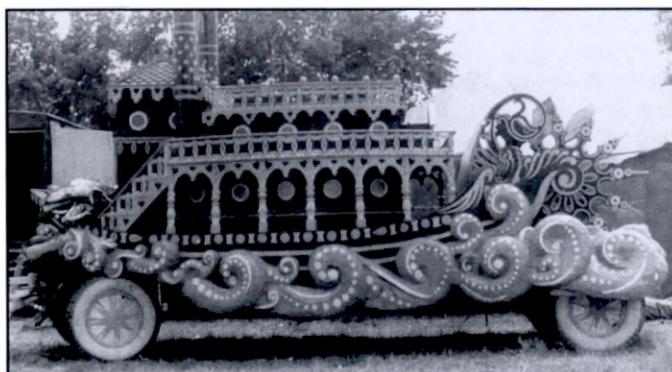
Section A NEW YEAR'S EVE

8 Men, mounted Heralds and Chessmen, each carrying a hand bell.

4 Baby Elephants surrounding.

I Little Emily Elephant whose howdah is a Cradle carrying the New Year, represented by a Midget as a

The Showboat float in the 1953 spec. Dom Yodice collection.



Baby.
 5 Elephant men.
 1 Man Midget as the New Year In Little Smily's Howdah.
 1 Man Clown (Albert White ?) as the Nurse for the New Year.
 1 man as Father Time.
 2 Man Clowns who represent NIGHT and DAY.
 1 Girl representing SPRING.
 1 Girl representing SUMMER.
 1 Girl representing FALL.
 1 Girl representing Winter.
 1 Carriage to represent a Water Wagon.
 1 Man Driver for Carriage, dressed as a Volstead Prohibitionist.
 2 Men Clowns as Drunks, riding Water Wagon Carriage
 1 Man as the Devil, with a Pitchfork.

SECTION B ST. VALENTINE'S DAY
 2 Men carrying large prop heart.
 8 Girl Dancers as Paper Valentines (Pink like folded paper).
 Paper VALENTINE FLOAT.
 1 Man driver for Float.
 3 Girls on Float.

SECTION C SAINT PATRICK'S DAY
 1 Man Clown (Gene Lewis) as Irish Drum Majorette.
 4 Men Clowns (small ones) wearing inflated rubber foundations and looking like Irish Cops.
 1 Boy. Boy and Girl both on Jaunting Cart.

1 Man Leader for Jaunting Cart.
 8 Girl Dancers as Irish Fairy Girls. Each carries a mechanical sparkler device.

4 Men Midgets, resenting Leprechauns in Toadstools.

SECTION D APRIL FOOL'S DAY
 2 Girls, mounted riding side-saddle.

2 Horses as Centaurs.
 2 Men leaders for Centaur Horses.
 1 Man as King Jester.
 4 Men as Monkeys, bearing April fool Canopy for King Jester.
 1 Canopy for King Jester.
 6 Men in Dragon Covering.
 1 Man Clown as a Knight.
 1 Man Operating, Prop Flying Saucer built on small motor car.
 1 Prop Flying Saucer.
 4 Men Tumblers as flying Saucer

Men from another Plant.
 1 Man Clown as a Dowager who is chased by Flying Saucer.

SECTION E EASTER
 8 Girl Dancers Easter Lilies.
 Easter Bunny Float.
 1 Man Driver for Float.
 2 Horses dressed as Rooster pulling Float.
 2 Girls (small ones) in Easter Eggs on float.
 1 Man as Mr. Pig.
 1 Man as Mrs. Pig.
 1 Man as Mr. Cat.
 1 Man as Mrs. Cat.
 1 Man as Mr. Bull.
 1 Man as Mrs. Cow.
 1 Man as Mr. Rooster.
 1 Man as Mrs. Hen.
 3 Men Midgets, as Baby Chicks.

SECTION F FOURTH OF JULY
 3 men (one should be a boy) as the painting
 The Spirit of '76.
 1 Man Mounted as George Washington (Mask).
 8 Girl Dancers (Routine of carrying and Whirling Batons, (Tights Colonial Costumes).
 6 Girls as Betsy Ross Girls, carrying large American Flag. (Replica of original flags showing only 13 states.)

SECTION G HALLOWEEN
 1 Man Clown as a Witch, riding a Pogo Stick, disguised to look like a broom.
 2 Men, Stilt Men, as Pumpkin Heads.
 1 Man Midget as Pumpkin head.
 Halloween Float, on Jeep.
 1 Driver for float. No costume.
 2 Girls inside steaming Cauldron on float (Tights, good figures). Followed by the grotesque Charles Addams family, all of whom carry dishes, napkins, knives and forks.
 1 Girl as the Wife.
 1 Man as the Husband.
 1 Man as the Butler.
 1 Man as the Grandmother.
 2 Men Midgets as the Children, New Buick Automobile
 2 Men as Ghosts riding in back. No costumes.

SECTION H THANKSGIVING

CORNUCOPIA FLOAT
 2 Horses as Turkeys, Pulling float.
 1 Man Driver for Float.
 4 Girls on Float, representing various Fruits.

4 Men Dancers as Red Indians (Masks).
 8 Girl Dancers as Pilgrims. They dance with the Indians, a Minuet. (Long hoop skirts).

1 Man Clown as pilgrim who is chased by Man as a Turkey, carrying a Musket.

Miles White, a long time designer for Ringling-Barnum.

SECTION I CHRISTMAS
 6 Men as Snow Men, each pulling lighted Christmas Trees mounted on 6 Sleds.

SANTA CLAUS JEEP
 1 Man Driver for Jeep. No costume, he is concealed.
 6 Ponies dressed as Reindeer.
 8 Men Leaders for Ponies.
 1 Man clown as Santa Claus. (A Star Clown).
 1 Anne Mace as Christmas Tree Ornament Girl on Sleigh.

THE JEEP IS FOLLOWED BY TOYS AND PRESENTS PARADE, WHICH MERGES INTO THE PAY-OFF SECTION.

SECTION J BIRTHDAYS
 8 Men as Gift Boxes, which later open up, revealing toys inside. Four men open the boxes on each side of the track.

2 Mommy Doll Toys in Boxes.
 2 Pretty Doll Toys in Boxes.
 2 Chinese Doll Toys in Boxes.
 2 Dutch Boy Dolls in Boxes.

2 Baby Elephants Completely dressed in gray plush and with a winding key on their backs like toy stuffed elephants.

2 Men Elephant leaders.
 1 Man Clown (Charlie Bell) with dogs dressed like the toy elephants above.
 6 Girl Acrobatic Dancers (Pink & White Tights).

1 Toy Music Box Float PAYOFF
 1 Banner spelling HAPPY BIRTHDAY, emerging from Payoff Float.
 2 Girls as Traveling Ladies, walk-



ing with Elephant Train.

5 Elephant Men.

4 Men Holders for the Surprise Banner from float.

1 Lead-off Engine Elephant.

1 First Train Elephant.

1 Second Train Elephant.

2 Third Train Elephants (Pulling Payoff Float).

1 Emmett Kelly, carrying Birthday Cake.

Total number of men in spec 130.

Total number of women in spec 74. (Of the total 204, 10 are midgets and 17 are clowns.)

In 1955 the 85th edition of the Greatest Show on Earth presented Holidays, a celestial calendar cavalcade. The spectacle was directed, staged and choreographed by Richard Barstow. Barstow and his sister Edith had done the choreography for the Judy Garland's *A Star Is Born* and *The Greatest Show on Earth* film.

Barstow was brought to the circus by John Murray Anderson in 1949. He took over the staging and directing of the performance in 1952.

The costumes and floats were designed by Miles White. The costumes were made by Max Weldy in his Sarasota headquarters.

The floats were: Thanksgiving; automobile convertible; Water Wagon; Halloween, on Jeep; Christmas Sleigh, on Jeep; Easter Rabbit; Jaunting Cart (St. Patrick's Day); Valentine; Flying Saucer; several small sleights and Birthday, payoff float.

Presented as display No. 15 the parade was divided into two songs *Three Cheers for the Holidays* and *Birthdays*. John North wrote the music and the lyrics were by Irving Caesar. It was staged by Richard Barstow and designed by Miles White.

White had come to the circus in 1941 as one of the many designers who worked for Norman Bel Geddes. At age 27 White had already designed costumes for two Broadway shows as well as nightclub reviews at New York's Copacabana. He was first hired by Bel Geddes to design costumes for Sonja Henie's



The Bell wagon as it appeared in the 1955 spec. Dom Yodice collection.

It Happened on Ice at the Center Theater. Geddes received the credit, however White was the actual designer. When Bel Geddes went to work for the circus he brought White along, paying him his usual salary of \$75 a week.

North was aware that White was the actual costume designer. In 1942 White's assignment was expanded to designing costumes for the performers as well. He made his first trip to Sarasota with the Bel Geddes staff to take part in the preparations for the 1942 performance. By then John Murray Anderson had joined the Bel Geddes staff.

The circus in 1942 featured The Elephant Ballet. George Balanchine was hired to do the choreography. White became involved in the elephant production.

White continued with the big show through the 1955 season. By then Max Weldy had become a major factor in the circus productions. Unbeknown to White, Weldy had suggested that his friend Marcel Vertes be hired as the costume designer.

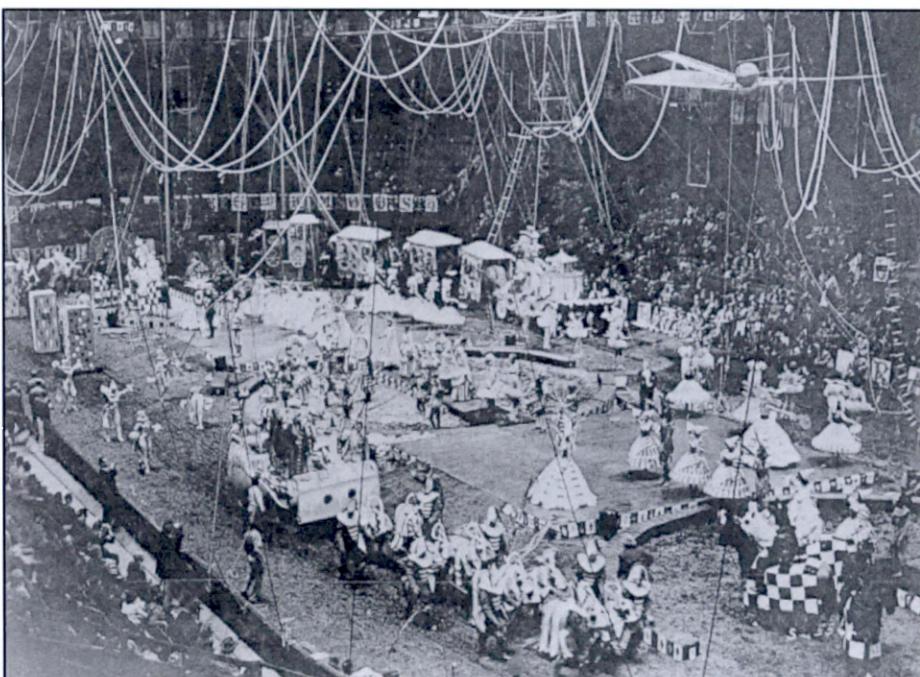
North, at the time consumed with saving money, went along.

Miles White returned to the show in 1957 to design the circus. Using a United Scenic Artists (union) contract dated September 4, 1956 Ringling-Barnum agreed to pay White \$5,000.

He was then out of the picture after a remarkable run with the show from 1941 to 1957. He died in New York City on February 17, 2000 at age 85.

Bill Montague's *White Tops* review of 1955 show noted, "The second production number was titled Holidays

The 1955 spec in Madison Square Garden. Circus World Museum collection.



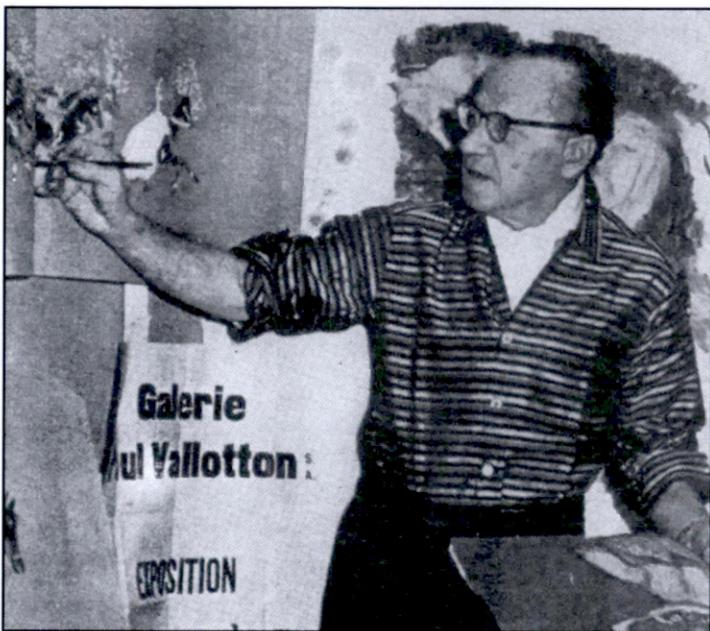
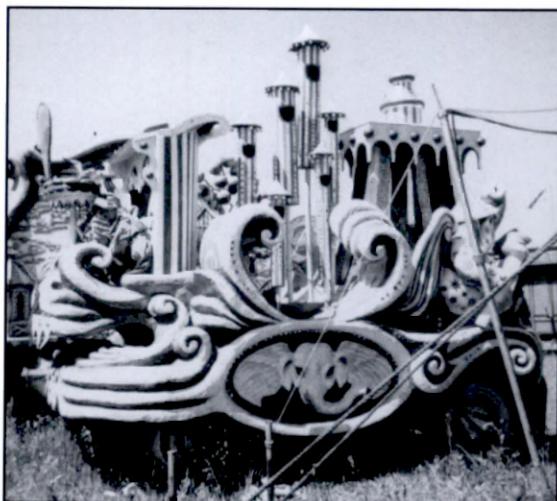
--with two songs featured. This is a bewildering kaleidoscope of colorful lavishness dedicated to the festive Days of the American calendar—including floats depicting Hallowee, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Years and Easter. It all added up to a very satisfying number.

"The third of the production numbers had the title of Mama's In The Park, which featured the largest herd of performing elephants ever assembled and which includes about 20 baby elephants. Number closed with the elephant long mount. Personnel in this number were attired in costumes of the period when there were band concerts.

"The grand finale of the show was the production number—Rainbow Round The World, featuring a song of the same title. Merle Evans and his band, gaily costumed, marched to the center ring to play during the number. Directly in front of this ring was the agile Billie Mahoney who displayed real talent as a baton twirler. Three large rainbow colored balls were raised above the rings and below these girls executed various iron jaw routines. It was probably the most colorful finale of all times, it really was as beautiful as a rainbow."

The final year of the Big Show under canvas saw a number of pro-

A float in the 1956 spec.



✓ Marcel Vertes the designer who came and went in 1956.

duction changes.

For unknown reasons Miles White was not hired to design the production numbers and spec floats for the 1956 show.

White was replaced by the French Impressionist Marcel Vertes through the efforts of Max Weldy. An agreement using a United Scenic Artists union contract form in part stated: "Agreement made this 9th day of June, 1955, between Marcel Vertes and Ringling Bros. & Barnum and Bailey.

"1. The manager hereby agrees to and does engage the services of the designer, and the designer hereby accepts the engagements to design and to do the work hereafter specified for the production by the show for 1956, consisting of props, floats and

decorations to be produced by the show and to be opened on or before the 1st day of April, 1956.

II. The designer agrees to design the said production and to tender the following services in connection therewith: To furnish all designs for props, floats and decorations for all presentations of the circus.

"(a) To complete either a working model of the settings to scale or to complete sketches or sketch models of the settings and necessary working drawings for construction carpenter.

"(b) To supply the contracting painter with color schemes or color sketches sufficient for contracting painter.

"(c) To design or approve properties required for the production, including draperies and furniture.

"(d) To plot the necessary lighting, and to specify lighting equipment.

"(e) To supply specifications for the construction carpenter, to supervise the building and painting of sets and the making of properties and to solicit estimates for the same for the show from contractors satisfactory to the show such estimates to be submitted to the show at a specific time "with firms submitting said estimates present when same are opened.

"(f) To attend first out-of-town and New York openings of the production

The Scherazade float in the 1956 spec.





The Old King Cole float in the 1956 spec.

and the dress rehearsals of the same, and to conduct the scenic lighting rehearsals thereof.

"(g) To render same services for the show if the production is reproduced for road companies by the show; or if road rights of said productions are sold or licensed to others.

"(h) To supply blueprints for the construction of all floats.

"III. The show agrees: To pay the designer the sum of six thousand dollars in full payment for the services to be rendered.

"Not less than one-third (1-3) thereof, to wit, the sum of two thousand dollars upon the execution of this agreement, one-third (1-3) to wit, the sum of two thousand dollars on the 15th day of July, 1955, which payment shall be made only upon completion of all sketches and designs, the designer hereby agree-

The Sleeping Beauty float in the 1956 spec.

ing to furnish all sketches, one third (1-3), to-wit, the sum of two thousand dollars on the fifth office day after the first day after the first public performance, either in the Metropolitan area or elsewhere."

Vertes was late in providing sketches, but the union still wanted a second payment.

In a August 11, 1955 letter to circus attorney Richard Smith, Michael B. Burke noted: "I understand that you received a phone call from Rudy Karnolt of United Scenic Artists, giving us one week to settle his account.

"As you probably know, the circus signed a contract with Marcel Verte to design the floats and costumes for next years performance.

"We agreed to pay Mr. Vertes a total of \$18,000 for his services. The first installment of \$6,000 was due and paid at the time the contract was signed. The contract calls for our paying a second installment of \$6,000 by July 15, but it provides that payment should be made only upon completion of all sketches and designs.

"We have not as yet seen these

sketches and designs but expect to in the next several days. You can advise Mr. Kar-nolt when we have seen the sketches we shall send along the next installment of \$6,000 according to the terms of our agreement."

Like all the other "artists" Vertes' contract assured that he would be given credit at the head of the program of the production directly under the Director. The demands for billing by Vertes caused a problem with Richard Barstow as to the size of type listing them in the program.

The 1956 spec Say It with Flowers was staged by Richard and Edith Barstow and was designed by Marcel Vertes. Izzy Cervone replaced band-leader Merle Evans. Robert Dover was ringmaster. Frank Loesser composed the songs.

The floats in the spec were Wedding of the Wheat; Swing; Tulips and Bicycles; Twelve Girls Carriage; Amish Carriage; Scherazade; Old King Cole; Merry-Go-Round; Sleeping Beauty; and the payoff Frogs float on a Jeep.

Bill Montague in his *White Tops* review of the 1956 performance noted, "The magnificent super spectacle—Say It With Flowers—came just before intermission. There were several floats including one of tulips. A limited number of elephants appeared in spec parades, but at no time was the 52 carried this season out together, and there was no trained elephant act.

"A Soko finale for the performance was titled-Hoop-Dee-Do a riot of color. The band attired in gay uniforms marched to the center ring. At one point a featured majorette, Billie Mahoney, was astride an elephant twirling two batons. Colorful garbed girls occupied swings set up in each ring."

Other production numbers designed by Vertes were the big elephant number Ringling Rock n' Roll and the finale Hoop Dee Doo.

A Veretes painting adorned the cover of the 1956 program.

A special thanks to Fred Dahlinger, the Circus World Museum and Dom Yodice for extensive information and illustrations. Other contributers were the Ringling Museum of Art, Richard J. Reynolds III, Ernest Albrecht and Robert Sabia.



Willie O'Dale and Willie O'Dell

By John Daniel Draper

To the casual reader there can be considerable confusion concerning these two principal riders. Willie O'Dale (1859-1932) was preceded a generation earlier by William Owen Dale, who was a rider on the National Circus & Gymnastic Arena Co. and also on the Mammoth Eagle Circus, both in 1836. These engagements were followed by seasons on Frost & Co. (1837), Grand National Arena Co., successor to Bacon & Dierous (1839), Welch, Bartlett & Co. (1840), Howes & Co's Great U. S. Circus (1840) and finally on the New York Circus of Welch & Mann and the New York Circus of Bartlett & Delavan, both in 1841.

William T. O'Dell, Sr. (-1866) was a somersault equestrian and leaper on Levi J. North (1851), Dan Rice (1852), R. Sands & Co. (1853), Myers & Madigan Circus (1854), John Robinson's Circus (1857), Robinson & Lake (1858-1861), Nixon & Co. (1863) and Alexander Robinson (1866).

His wife, the former Rosa Meyer, was a prominent equestrienne. On the Myers and Madigan's Railroad Circus when it played Harrisburg, Pennsylvania in 1854, Mlle Rosa was listed as a daring and beautiful principal equestrienne. On the same program William was a dramatic scene rider and double somersault performer. O'Dell died at Philadelphia on October 28, 1866. His widow, Rosa, survived until March 15, 1884.

The career of Willie O'Dell, Jr. (-1929) will be considered presently. Other O'Dells were Charles, a multi-horse rider, trainer and equestrian director, who was active from 1881 to 1897, and Cyse, an aerialist and high school rider from 1926 to 1953. Neither of these individuals had any known relationship to Willie O'Dell, Jr.

Willie O'Dale

As reported by Gil Robinson in his William O'Dale was apprenticed

to Old John Robinson about 1867. He continued his riding career in 1871 on Van Amburgh, Siegrist & Frost and eventually developed into a good principal bareback rider and somersault equestrian. He was starred with the big circuses when the trick of leaping through a hoop of fire was new. As a principal rider, his contemporaries were the great Charles Fish and James Robinson as well as Orrin Hollis, Homer Hobson, Bob Whitney and William Showles. His 4 horse act with somersaults was always strongly featured.

In 1872 O'Dale was with the Great Central Park Menagerie. When he and his wife quit Campbell's Circus on August 23, 1878 in St. Louis, he went over to W. W. Cole where by 1879, in addition to bareback riding, he was a hurdle rider and did a 5

This 1878 John H. Murray Circus newspaper ad listed Wm. O'Dell.

AT
WARREN, WEDNESDAY, MAY 29TH.
JOHN H. MURRAY'S
GRAND CIRCUS.

MR. MURRAY takes pleasure in announcing the return of his MAGNIFICENT CIRCUS to the United States, after a prosperous tour of the entire West Indies, and last from Havana, Cuba, being everywhere greeted with overflowing audiences who universally pronounce his Grand Circus the best that ever Visited their Country.

Leading and only Purely LEGITIMATE EQUESTRIAN ESTABLISHMENT

in America. The only circus that performs all its attractions! The cherished institution of the people for the Amusement of the Young.

MISS LIZZIE MARCELLAS, The Beautiful, Unapproachable and Thoroughly Schooled Equestrienne.

JAMES MELVILLE, The Great Australian Bare-Back Rider.

SENORITA MILLIE TOURNOUR, Equestrienne and Queen of the air.

WILDEA COOK.

Beyond dispute the Champion Somersault Rider of the World.

LITTLE ALEXANDER, the Wonder of the age, in his exciting hurdle act on two diminutive ponies.

PROFESSOR STOWE'S wonderful Troup of Educated Dogs.

WM. O'DELL, the Great American Bare Back Trick and Somersault Rider.

WILL STOWE, the American Clown and Jester.

GEOFFALDI BIBB, the World's Clown and Pantomime Artist.

Participating in the Athletic Trials of Skill are such sterling actors as FRED GENE LEECH, CLIFFORD LEOPOLD, the renowned KIT CARSON, COOKS, HECTOR, FAXE, SMITH, EDWARDS, CASTELL, WALKER and ancillaries.

Fifteen Trick Horses.

Including the intelligent animal, BLACK EAGLE.

and the beautiful BLACK BESS, the best trained and most valuable stud of Horses on this Continent.

The splendid Brass band will be under the leadership of Mr. Oscar Perry, whose reputation as a leader is famous in the land. The members of his band are picked men selected for their greatest courage and who will accomplish that music hath charms to. Their selections will be the most popular of the day.

2 Grand Free Pageants.

1st—In the streets every day.

horse act. In 1881 as one of the 5 featured equestrians on W. W. Cole he rode a 7 horse act.

Willie O'Dale's name appeared in the 1885 Adam Forepaugh official program listings as a bareback rider and a double team Roman standing race rider. Later that season he was riding on Burr Robbins Circus and over the winter of 1885-86 he was with Orrin Bros. In the regular 1886 season on Miller, Okey & Freeman he rode his thrilling 4 horse act. In 1888 Charley Ewers, the principal jockey rider of Great Wallace, was severely injured in a fall from his horse on June 9 and was incapacitated for some time. William O'Dale was able to step in and substitute for him.

For the years 1889, 1891 and 1892 O'Dale rode a principal act on Barnum & Bailey. In June of 1889 before he joined that show, he appeared on the New York City 4th Avenue Circus as a bareback rider along with Charles Fish and Annie Carroll. Also on that bill was Wm O'Dell, Jr. in his 3 horse act. Along with Annie Carroll, O'Dale had joined Barnum & Bailey on July 8 at Concord, New Hampshire. In Display No. 5 he did a principal bareback somersault equestrian act and in Display No. 14 he presented a thrilling and daring bareback hurdle act. On July 28th at Utica, New York, the show was visited by Harry Wambold, Annie's mother, and Mrs. O'Dale. At Auburn, New York on July 31 Willie was slightly injured in his riding presentation. On October 12th O'Dale and his wife and Robert Whittaker sailed with Strurgis' Grand Circo Americano for Caracas, Venezuela. They were not to return from this South American tour until August of 1890. Then for the remainder of that season, O'Dale rode on the John McMahan show. At one point in the 1891 season, when both Archie O'Brien and William Showles were ill, O'Dale received



This 1888 Sells Bros. litho featured Willie O'Dell.

hearty applause as the lone male principal rider on Barnum & Bailey.

With his wonderful acrobatic equestrian flights into the air from the back of his galloping steed, William O'Dale was in Display No. 7 as a principal bareback rider on Adam Forepaugh in 1893. For the last two weeks in December of that year he was a principal somersault equestrian at Proctor's Ladies Club Theatre on 23rd Street in New York City.

O'Dale used a new steed on Scribner & Smith in 1894 as he rode in two different displays. His marvelous exploits on a flying steed as a champion bareback rider were clowned by the famous George Hartzell. Later in the program he presented a pleasing and artistic bounding jockey act. For the next three years he appeared on a succession of shows, first as a principal bareback somersault rider on Cole & Lockwood (1895), then as equestrian director on the Bentley Show in 1896 and finally as a performer on Walter L. Main in 1897.

From 1905 until 1910 Willie O'Dale performed and was equestrian director on Sun Bros. Circus. In 1908 he was in a double carrying act with la Petite Eileen Sun as they presented classic poises and pictures on

the backs of 2 beautiful swift running horses. With a group of 5 thoroughbreds he also gave a terrific hurricane performance concluding with an exciting finish. The next year he appeared in a 6 horse act and in 1910 he presented several new manege and riding divertissements. Early in the season of 1910 he was equestrian director of Howes Great London Circus.

In later years he dropped out of sight. Although settling in New York City, he never visited the circus when it came to town in the spring. Few of his old professional associates knew of his whereabouts until he was taken to Bellevue Hospital, critically ill from his home on 12th Street. O'Dale died there on April 14, 1932.

Willie O'Dell, Jr.

Early in 1878 Willie O'Dell, Jr. was billed in newspaper advertisements for the John H. Murray Circus as a great bareback trick and somersault rider. However, for the next season in the route book for the W. C. Coup Circus he was listed as a pad rider and somersault specialist. Although throughout his career he was featured at times variously as a somersault and 4 horse rider and as a courier of the Czar in a great 23 horse act, no further mention was ever found of his riding bareback. This fact leaves us with the question to whether in his standing riding he

ever dispensed with the pad and truly rode bareback. There is no question that he was an equestrian somersault specialist.

For the 1880 season on W. C. Coup he added graceful pirouettes to his riding presentation. Still with Coup in 1881, he presented an interesting tumbling act as well as turns on the track as a thrilling hippodrome rider. He divided his time in 1883 between Adam Forepaugh, where he was a jockey rider on the track, and Sherman's Educated Horses & Hinman's Great European Circus on which he was a somersault and 4 horse rider. In that year we find the first reference to Mrs. William O'Dell. She was an entree rider and an assistant wardrobe mistress on the Adam Forepaugh Circus.

In 1884 at the time of the death of Mrs. William O'Dell, Sr., Willie O'Dell was residing in Honolulu. The Hertzberg Circus Collection contains an interesting document about this residency: By 'Mariposa' Permission is hereby granted to W. Odell, lately residing at Honolulu in the Hawaiian Islands, to PASS OUT of the Ports thereof on his destination to San Francisco. Signature, Willie O'Dell Given under MY HAND at the Custom House in Honolulu this 15th day of April 1884. E. R. Hendry, Collector."

On returning to the states, O'Dell that year was one of 5 riders on Frank A. Robbins Circus. There is a manuscript in the Thomas Parkinson Collection at the Circus World Museum that indicates that in that same season he was a rider on the W. H. Harris Nickel Plate Circus for which he received \$25 per week.

For the next five years he performed on a different circus each year. In 1885 he was on Van Amburgh, Reiche & Bros. Circus where he was a somersault equestrian and 4 horse rider. A courier for that season ran as follows: "William O'Dell, the Centaur Cyclone of the Circus Circle, A Dashing Dauntless Equestrian, the Greatest of them All, Proud Peer of his Profession; Van Amburgh, Chas. Reiche & Bros.'s New Railroad Shows, American and Japanese Circus, Museum, Aquarium and Menagerie;" Hyatt Frost,

manager; 39th year; winter quarters at Arnenia, New York.

The next year O'Dell spent his time on W. W. Cole as a jockey and bareback rider. Early in 1887 he was practicing at the Doris & Colvin winter quarters in Indianapolis for his 4 horse act and for the Roman standing races. It was noted that he had a new suit for the 4 horse act and that the ladies said "it was a beauty." It was also noted that he was "quite a gentleman, full of nerve and of great promise and still handles the 4 horse act to satisfaction." In July of that season he substituted for Tom McIntyre, the regular equestrian director, so that McIntyre could visit his wife on Sells Bros. Circus.

Willie O'Dell in 1888 appeared on Sells Bros. Circus where he did the Courier of St. Petersburg act, riding and reining 23 horses on the hippodrome track. In June of the following year he was a 3 horse rider on the 4th Avenue Circus in New York City and later went to Barney Carroll's Old Time New York Circus, a one ring show that appeared under canvas at 13th Street and 4th Avenue.

In both 1893 and 1894 William O'Dell was with Leon W. Washburn's Circus as the equestrian director and as one of 2 four horse riders. In the latter year he transferred to Walter L. Main where he occupied a number of spots on the program. He rode a 4 horse act and a manege act and drove a 5 horse tandem offering. In addition he was a ringmaster, leaper and tumbler in addition to being a Roman standing rider (2 of 3) and a cowboy (1 of 5). His wife was also very versatile in her offerings. She did an aerial act which included loop walking and presented a very finished performance with her schooled horse, "Humboldt." In addition, she did tandem and hurdle riding as well as hippodrome riding on the track with her husband.

O'Dell was with Richold's Show in 1897 and both he and his wife were listed in the John Robinson's Circus employees' ledger for 1898. They were also on John Robinson's Circus

in 1901. Willie was assistant to William Dutton who was in charge of the ring performance. The following year O'Dell presented ponies on the



William O'Dell as equestrian director of Sun Bros. Circus.

same show. By 1905 he had definitely retired as a standing rider as was noted in the John Robinson's route book. That season, he was a guest of the show at LaSalle, Illinois. By 1909 Millie Alma O'Dell, Willie's wife, was deceased and Willie was connected with William Roche's Bijou Theatre in Chicago.

In 1910 and 1911 O'Dell served as equestrian director of the Adam Forepaugh and Sells Bros. Circus. He died of a heart attack in the spring of 1929 at his home in Bay Shore, Long Island, New York and was interred in Oakwood Cemetery at Bay Shore.

Charles O'Dell

The career of this trainer and multi-horse rider began on Barnum & London in 1881 as a ring stock groom. By November of 1887, while on Sells Bros., he was in charge of the famous 30 horse act trained by Allen Sells.

Charles O'Dell was the equestrian director on Sells Bros. in 1889. He was also the star of the show because of the dexterity with which he performed the "Postillion of Moscow." Featured as Sig. Bleau he drove at one time 35 horses under full gallop. Quoting from the New York Clipper of May 18, 1889: "This is a feat that is said to have never been accomplished before in this or any other country. To Allen Sells is due the

credit of this achievement. He has for the past 2 years been untiring in his patient instructions to the horses, and, by a series of straps and buckles, the 35 horses are individually and collectively absolutely controlled in the riding, reining and driving by Sig. Bleau. The rear horses do not necessarily follow the leaders, but are guided by the rider and no guards or assistants are placed on the track to watch or prevent the horses from swerving. It is a great achievement and high honors belong to Sig. Bleau and Allen Sells."

In the spring of 1890, Fisher & Aiken's New Monster R. R. Shows was inaugurated by two former executives of John Robinson's Circus, George T. Fisher and George W. Aiken. Charles O'Dell, in charge of the hippodrome, in record time broke a 22 horse team for the track and worked with James Quinian on the standing races. There was a total of 52 head of horses on the show, which performed under a 100 or 120 round top tent with two 50 foot middle pieces. The sixteen hippodrome features included Roman standing, donkey, ostrich and flat races, the pony express, a stage coach robbery and barrel and obstacle as well as sack and chariot races, ending with O'Dell's riding and driving the 22 horses. The new Roman chariots were beautifully decorated. Struggling financially by the time it reached Baraboo, Wisconsin. on July 31, the show lost its train by the middle of August when the B&O Railroad repossessed the cars. Fisher & Aiken's then tried to move by boat on the Mississippi. It finally collapsed at Burlington, Iowa on September 4.

Charles O'Dell joined Ringling Bros. Circus for 1891 and 1892 where he was a Roman rider and a 4 horse rider. He also rode and controlled a 5 horse tandem hurdle race, driving and guiding the 4 leaders while seated on a thoroughbred horse, all moving at headlong speed. Also in 1891 Mrs. O'Dell was an animal trainer and a 5 horse tandem and hippodrome performer.

For the remaining part of the decade of the 1890's O'Dell appeared on a succession of circuses including W. B. Reynolds in 1893, F. E.



Cyse O'Dell on Sells-Floto in 1924.

Davis Mammoth Empire Shows in 1894, Great Exposition Circus (John C. O'Brien, manager) in 1895 and J. H. LaPearl in 1896 and 1897. In all of these seasons he did the sensational 4 horse act for which he was now famous and, except for 1893 and 1895, he also served as equestrian director.

Cyse O'Dell

This performer had a career in the circus that extended over a quarter of a century beginning in 1926. From that year through 1932 she regularly appeared on Sells-Floto Circus. For all of these years she was listed as the rider of a high school horse (probably more correctly manege) and did one of several aerial acts—aerial ballet (1926-1928, 1932), swinging ladders (1928-1931) and iron jaw (1931-1932). She also rode hurdle horses (1927, 1930, 1931) and was a wild west performer in 1927 and 1930. For the latter season she rode with Hank Durnell's Co. which was the wild west troupe.

After two seasons, 1933 and 1934, on Hagenbeck-Wallace where she rode manege and did aerial acts, she went to the newly

framed Cole Bros. Clyde Beatty Circus in 1935. She remained there through 1940, and returned in 1943 and 1945. She also appeared on Cole Bros. in 1952 at the Chicago Stadium. During her tenure on Cole Bros. she rode manege in 1936, 1939 and 1940. In 1940 she also worked with elephants. The rest of her offerings were mostly as an aerial gymnast, actually the one arm phlange, in 1935 through 1939 and in 1943 and 1945. In April of 1938 on the opening night of the show, in an endurance feat she did 100 body swings. In other years she performed with the iron jaw and the aerial ballet and on the swinging ladder.

She was also on Robbins Bros. Circus in 1938 riding manege, leading the parade with Esma Maley and doing the aerial gymnast phlange act.

In 1941 Cyse spent the season on Barker Bros. Circus doing the one arm phlange and on the Chicago Olympia Circus in the aerial ballet.

Cyse O'Dell in the 1930s.

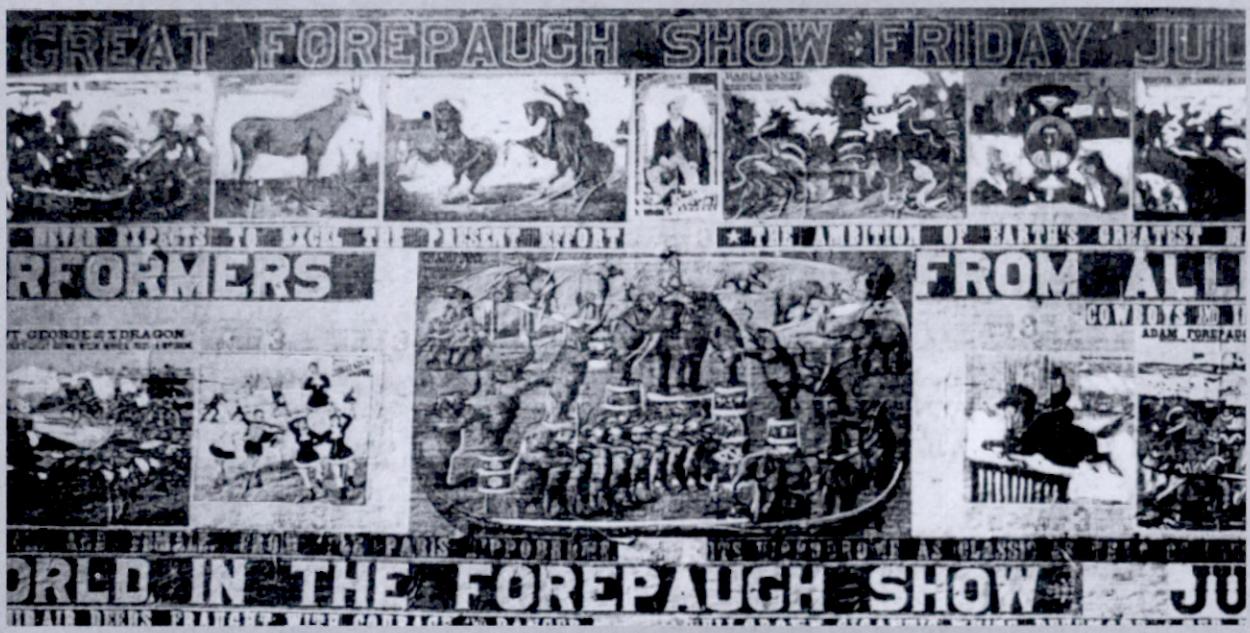


"Cyse O'Dell"
Cyse O'Dell high jumping on Sells-Floto in 1924.

She repeated the Olympia engagement for 1942. In 1944 she was in the aerial ballet on both Polack Bros. Circus and the Minneapolis Zurah Shrine Circus. For part of the 1945 season Cyse O'Dell performed on the swinging ladder with Austin Bros. and the next year she was an aerial gymnast with the one arm phlange on both Buck Owens Circus and the Polack Bros. Circus. The year 1949 found Cyse O'Dell as an aerialist in the Pleiades ballet on Ward Bros. In 1950 she worked with horses and did the Spanish web on Al G. Kelly and Miller Bros. While appearing with under-canvas circuses, in the off seasons she performed her aerial acts on numerous Shrine dates: St. Paul's Osman Shrine (1932, 1937), Toledo's Zenobia Shrine (1933), Denver's El Jebel Shrine (1934), Minneapolis' Zurah Shrine (1934), Chicago's Medinah Shrine (1938) and Indianapolis' Murat Shrine as well as Chicago's Old Time Yankee Circus (1932).

The last year in which it was discovered that she was still performing was 1953 when she appeared on the Spanish web with the Tangier Temple Shrine Circus in Omaha, Nebraska, produced by Rink Wright.

Interesting Bill Stands





Half A Century Under The Big Top

By R. M. Harvey

Robert M. Harvey, always known as R. M., said he could make money for anybody but himself. Indeed, while he trooped with many successful field shows during his over fifty-year career as a circus executive, he rarely made money with his own ventures. While a student at Depauw University in Greencastle, Indiana, he had a chance meeting with Ben Wallace which eventually led to the twenty-six year old joining the Great Wallace circus as assistant contracting agent in 1896 for \$20.00 a week (around \$415.00 today), a sum he considered huge even though he had to pay his own expenses.

After Harvey got into a beef with Wallace during the 1903 season, he jumped to the Barnum and Bailey Circus as the number one contracting agent. He rejoined the Wallace organization, now called Hagenbeck-Wallace, in 1907 where he remained for a number of years as general agent.

After his Coop and Lent truck circus failed, he had more success with a black minstrel show. He joined the American Circus Corporation in the early 1920s where he served in a

R. M. Harvey. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives.

variety of positions. In the 1930s he went over to Claude Webb's Russell Bros. Circus. He finished his career on Dailey Bros. in the 1940s where as general agent and advisor to owner Ben Davenport, he played an important part in that show's growth into a major railroad circus.

While on the Dailey show, Harvey bought the Perry, Iowa Chief, a rural weekly paper that he made into a daily. The articles in this series were originally published in the Chief, then collected into a pamphlet entitled Half A Century Under The Big Top.

The old showman died in 1959.

Trouble Shooters Of The Circus Was the Flying Squadron

The "Flying Squadron," as we operated it with the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus, was an organization something similar to a town's fire department.

It was a part of the advance force. It was the "trouble shooter" both offensively and defensively. We made trouble for the other fellow and overcame the trouble he made for us.

Our motto, that is the motto for both shows that were involved in an opposition fight, was that everything was "fair in love and war."

Both sides would do deeds that were unethical and maybe even criminal.

For instance at Wenatchee, Washington the Ringling show and our show were both booked and the dates close together. Both shows had men on the ground to protect their interests.

The men of both shows were stopping at the same hotel. Both crews



A large 1902 Great Wallace Circus bill stand.

left one man sitting up all night to keep an eye on the opposition.

One night the Ringling boys had made seven barrels of paste, leaving the barrels in the spring wagons which they were to drive the next day.

The wagons were left standing over night on a riverbank. I had our paste made but instead of leaving it so exposed, I had arranged with a big garage to put our wagons in their place overnight.

Our men had gone to bed. There was, however, a fire escape on the back side of the hotel, very convenient for use by anyone wishing to depart to the night without using the front entrance.

The Ringling men knew our paste was in the garage, so did not try to bother it.

But here is what happened that night. While the Ringling boys thought our men were sleeping soundly, our men did not go to bed and did not stay in the hotel, but were up and gone on the route with our paste and were well ahead with their days work at daybreak.

When the Ringling men did get up and went to the wagons where the paste was stored, they discovered



that their paste barrels were empty and the paste had been dumped into the river.

Of course that situation made the Ringling men lose a day and we got a town ahead of them. No one saw our men empty their paste and there was no evidence available that they had anything to do with it.

However, before the season was over, the Ringling boys got even with us and after such exploits were over, the two groups of men would meet some night and talk over their experience.

The "flying squadron" was always on the alert and the boys never knew more than one day in advance where they would be the next day. We might be in Lancaster, Ohio, today and two days later we would be in Trinidad, Colorado, fighting a different show.

At Lancaster, the John Robinson show and the Hagenbeck-Wallace circus were only two days apart, both had secured a pretty good billing and it was up to us to do something to turn the tables.

There is a good printing house nearby in Cincinnati and I went there and ordered a set of dates the same color as the regular Robinson dates and the same size.

The Robinson show had finished their posting while our men were still in the town. That night I had our men post the Cincinnati dates I had ordered over all the dates of the John Robinson Show.

They read the exact date of the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus, so it made it appear as if both shows would be in the same town on the same date. The Robinson billers had all left town. No one of that show was let behind to notice the posting of the wrong date.

Of course the public thought the Robinson show had changed their date purposely so as to be there on our date, when, as a matter of fact, the date the Robinson show exhibited there, being there on a different date from the one we had advertised for them, you could hardly tell there was a circus in town.

They were the big shows including



Another large 1902 Great Wallace bill stand.

Buffalo Bill, Forepaugh Circus, Walter L. Main, and Hagenbeck-Wallace. We kept our boys out on the road night after night, covering the bills of other shows and posting ours.

We had the largest crew of men and the biggest supply of paper, so were to keep our dates in the foremost rank of the public and the business for us it was really wonderful.

At Parkersburg, West Virginia, we were fighting the Buffalo Bill Show. Both shows had secured the advertising privilege on the span wires of the street car lines.

The span wires are the wires that hold the trolley wires in place.

It was agreed that the Buffalo Bill and the Hagenbeck-Wallace Show would divide the space on the span wires. Each show placed one banner on each side of the trolley wires.

The two shows were only two days apart, but the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus was the first in.

I did not want our show to see all of these Buffalo Bill dates and banners on the trolley lines, so the second night before the Buffalo Bill Show was due in, I had our men go out at midnight and take down Buffalo Bill banners.

We had no sooner started that job than our men, including myself, were arrested and taken to police headquarters.

However, I had seen the police judge during that day and had told him in advance what we intended to do. It seemed he was especially fond of circuses but did not care for the wild west show, so he promised me he would treat us okay.

When we were arrested that night

I called him, told him the story and he at once notified the police to let us go.

We were arrested two or three times that night and each time the police judge told the police then quit bothering us.

We had ten men in our "flying squadron." Each man received ten dollars per week more than the usual billers. This was because they were all men who were reckless workers and who took many dangerous chances in their work

At Richmond, Virginia, we secured permission to cover the entire back-side of the new Seaboard Airline depot that was being built. The building was seven stories high.

Our men went from top to bottom and as they did their work. Hundreds of people stood on the walk watching them. Their job was tacking the banners.

The men would fill their mouths with eight ounce tacks, 25 or 20 at a time. They used magnetic hammers.

A man would hold one end of the banner with one hand, the magnetic hammer in the other hand and they would reach the hammer up to their mouth, get a tack on the banner, then tack the banner.

This required much skill as well as bravery to be up so high in the air on a swinging scaffold and get the banner in place so that it would show off well and be read.

This permission cost our show \$50. It was worth that to have the public watch our men do this posting work.

At Peoria, Illinois, we had a very odd opposition fight. We had not intended to show there and the town was put on the route without much advance notice.

In the meantime, the Walter L. Main Circus had contracted the town and they did a good job of doing so since they rather suspected we might drop in there.

As a result they had tied up all billboard and billing space, had lithography privileges for the windows, and had secured the street car advertising.

Only one thing was left for us to do, to let the neighbors know that the

Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus was coming.

I consulted the police chief and he advised me that there were over 50,000 residences in the city.

I then ordered an immense number of circus heralds to be distributed by our ten men, house to house, and not a single house was to be missed.

Our men treated those heralds as if they were five dollar bills, made a 100 per cent perfect job in their distribution. The result, while there was not a circus poster to be seen any place for the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus, and you could not tell the show was coming, we did a turn-away business, all on account of the house to house distribution of the heralds.

Troubles of The Bareback Riders

Rivalry In Choice Of Costume

Razor blades are now in demand in the dressing room for women with most circuses. The cause for this unusual demand is on account of the change in the costumes of female riders with the circus.

When tights predominated all was serene but now that a late custom to go bare legged in the circus ring has been adopted it seems that most of the women performers want to shave all the hair from their legs before appearing before the public.

However, we think this worry is unnecessary because it seems it would be impossible for people sitting on the seats at the circus, to see or notice the hair on the legs. But the girls think differently.

With the early circuses in this country, when all shows were using only one ring, the rings were made of dirt. They were plowed up by the old time plow and much attention given to the preparation of the ring for the riders.

Now all this has been changed on account of the increased number of rings. Too much time and trouble would be required to make three rings of dirt, so now the shows carry what is known as wooden curb rings. This is done for two reasons.

The rings are more promptly made ready for the performer and then, too, with these curb rings it gives an opportunity for their use by horses to walk, and work on these curb rings.

With the old dirt rings, riders were seldom hurt if they fell from their horse, since landing on the soft dirt was not painful. But with the installation of the curb this was all changed.

Ella Bradna, one of the cleverest bareback riders the Ringling show ever had, broke her knee cap and had to be removed from the regular program and, in later years, worked in what is known as a picture act. She could no longer do the "jump up" or leaps. She was later made a high school rider.

There are not any classes among circus performers, yet there is, more or less, some distinction. The bareback riders of a circus seem to be a higher-class person. They ate better, were better educated, were trained to be more graceful, and have more style than the ordinary performer.

In the dressing room the trunks of the riders are not always adjacent to each other, but scattered in different parts of the big dressing tent. The individual rider likes to conceal her dress from others. They want to appear in the ring in a surprise wardrobe. There may be three riding acts at the same time in the three rings, but seldom do their costumes match. To keep up a variety of wardrobes, the girls must do as much of their dressing in secret to fool the competing riders.

Then as the three riders leave the rings, walking down the hippodrome track together, they can be heard saying to one another, "Why didn't you tell me you were going to wear your balloon costume today?" Yes, riders are really the aristocrats of the circus.

On the circus lot there are more arguments about the water situation than anything else. The big water wagon is in much demand. There are two water wagons with a big show. They get their water from the nearest fireplug to the show lot. One wagon looks after the needs of the cookhouse and dining tent. The other one, and the busiest one of the two, takes care of the needs of other

departments.

Every performer takes at least one cold-water bath a day, generally in the morning. Each person has an array of buckets awaiting the coming of the water wagon. At the same time the men in the menagerie are calling for water for their charges.

However, the elephants are not worried about the water, for they have been taken out to the fireplug to drink fresh water from the hydrant. Then the property men, the musicians, the ushers, are all clamoring for water while the performers are still waiting for their bath, or are trying to be the first ones to the water when it comes.

In the stables, among the several hundred horses, the ones used by the riders seem especially favored. They are located in the best spots of the big horse tent, their grooms are better trained and more thoughtful of their horses, since the backs of these rosin backs must be well curried and cleaned from all rosin.

The horses themselves seem to realize the importance of their looks. They wait patiently for the ribbons to be tied to their manes and to their tails. They hold their feet and hoofs up from the ground, so they can be cleaned.

As the horses for the ring are ready, they are really beautiful specimens of equine flesh and the horses themselves seem to enter into the spirit of pride associated with their acts as controlled by the alert, graceful, women riders.

Blanche Reed, Great Wallace lady rider.



It has been customary for years for the clowns to work with the riding acts. The clowns suddenly burst into action while the riders take a few seconds between tricks.

The comely riders do not like this. They do not want the clowns to be in front of their ring because they think they detract from the attention of the audience from the riding act. So they tell the clowns to go further down the

track and work in front of someone else's ring.

All circus performers have learned how to fall. If they did not know how and when to fall, there would be more serious accidents with a circus than there are now. No matter how far they fall, where they fall or what they are doing at the time, they will manage to fall in a manner that prevents them from being hurt.

Many a performer falls at the afternoon show and is carried out to the dressing tent. The public will leave the big tent, all talking about terrible accident and wondering if that act will ever be given again. However, when the time comes for the night show, that performer will be right back in the program doing her part as well as ever, with no evidence of her accident in the afternoon show.

There was only one time this apparently did not happen. It was the very beautiful "carrying act" as performed by the two Reed Sisters. The accident happened at Norfolk, Nebraska during the afternoon show.

Blanche Reed was holding her sister, Olga, high up on her shoulders, while she stood on the two horses that were galloping around the ring. Suddenly, one of the horses stumbled with a front foot, and the two riders and one horse all went down in a heap.

Olga Reed, the one high up on the shoulders of her sister, was most seriously hurt. No bones were broken, but she was badly bruised and not able to be in the ring again for about three weeks. She was left in the hospital at Norfolk and given every possible attention.

A Very Embarrassing Moment While Visiting a Cuban Circus

There are various ways to travel to Havana, Cuba. The most comfortable and most pleasant is to take the all night boat trip.

One can go from Miami, Florida, to Havana in about an hour by airplane, or a person can take a boat trip that only requires about 4 hours. Then again there is one boat trip that requires about 10 hours a night trip.

The advantage of the latter trip consists of enjoying comforts of a

cabin and relaxing as you view the Miami scenery along the Florida coast.

We took the all night boat trip, leaving Miami about 8 o'clock in the evening and arriving in Havana at 7 the next morning.

It took about half an hour to get off the boat since the Spanish officials at Havana look over your baggage and parcels. However, they are very courteous about it. The night we went across there were about 100 or more passengers going to Cuba.

The minute you land you are brought face to face with many signs marking historical spots connected with the Spanish War—the location of Dewey's ships as well as the stations of the different armies.

Seeing so much publicity regarding Sloppy Joe's place, that was one of the first spots we decided to see. From the advertising displayed and remarks about the place we expected to find a dilapidated spot.

However, when we went inside imagine our surprise to discover we were in a most beautiful spot, richly decorated and very finely furnished. It was one of the most attractive spots we had ever visited.

We do urge all visitors to see Sloppy Joe's place and enjoy one of their tasty sandwiches. All the while you will try to decipher its contents.

We had checked in at the Grand Hotel and our first meal was breakfast. It did not score well with me. I put most of the blame on the tasteless butter.

One of the first indication that you are out of the states is the Siesta Hour at noon. All public offices, banks and stores are closed for two hours, business is suspended generally and there is nothing you can do about it if you are in a hurry.

Another incident is the presence of boys, girls, old women and old men on the streets and in street cars selling lottery tickets.

Old women, that look to be 90 years old, feeble and all bent over, are among the leaders of the lottery ticket sales crowd.

Every Saturday night the \$50,000 is distributed in Havana among holders of those lottery tickets. The

proceeds from the sale of these tickets are used to defray the expense of the hospitals and orphanages in Cuba.

Rice is a very common food in Cuba but all the rice is imported from Arkansas, Texas and Louisiana, by the shipload.

The streets of Havana are mostly narrow and crooked, with frequent plazas and parks.

We went up to Fort Morro Castle on the hill and saw the troops, and had our picture taken with a tame trained rooster.

Visited a cockfight for a few minutes at the outskirts of the city.

Before we landed from the boat we saw dozens of little Cuban boys diving into the water to pick up pennies and money cast into the water by passengers on the boat.

The first night in town we had our guides take us out to a couple of their most noted night clubs and were entertained by their various activities, but we tired of that and departed for our hotel long before their program was completed.

There are two permanent circuses located in Havana. They generally remain there the entire year but may possibly spend a month outside of Havana visiting some other towns on the island.

We went to the Sanger Bros. Circus, the larger one of the two. It was quite centrally located and did a big business. We were recognized by the managers, who admitted us without charges, gave us good box seats and extended a cordial invitation for us to make their circus our headquarters as long as we were in the city. Sanger Bros. Circus is presented under what is known as a 100 foot round top tent. It had four center poles and used only one large ring for its performance.

The ring was 50 feet wide, where as the ring used in the states by American circuses is only 36 feet wide. There is lot much brilliance around the Spanish circus, all is rather dark and crude in appearance. Not much flag display or ornamentation.

The band consisted of ten musi-



cians and their program of music was made up almost entirely of Spanish music and to us it was most pleasing music and almost made us forget to watch the show.

However, the circus program itself was very high class and included the very best of acts. They are mostly booked from American circuses and are retained with the show in Havana for two or three weeks.

However, they are able to change their programs by many changes in the acts as performers are engaged who are prepared to do several different acts.

Our box seats were close to the ring and when the big eight tiger act was presented we were almost too close for comfort.

When we went to that circus we did not know who was on the program. However there was one group of four rather large buxom girls, good looking and shapely, very clever performers.

They were capable of doing a big horse act, a flying act and an iron jaw act. They were just completing their riding act in which they used three horses.

As they walked out of the ring they passed us and the leading lady give us a look of recognition and by a cordial gesture invited us back to the dressing room.

After the show ended we went back. As soon as I stepped into the dressing room I was greeted with a volley of kisses before I had time to introduce my wife, but after introducing her she was also welcomed.

The program of the 1950 Ringling-Barnum Circus in Havana.

These people were mostly old friends of mine as we had been on the same circus several times. They were known as the "Duttons."

Bessie Jordan had been a rider on the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus and while we were playing in Cleveland,

Ohio, James Dutton, who was also a rider on the circus, and Bessie Jordan were married, and I was a wedding guest.

The two of them made a very attractive pair with the circus. Unfortunately Dutton died about three years after they were married.

With three good horses on her hands the widow organized a little group of four women and secured very good bookings.

I had not seen her for years so that evening in the dressing room in Havana we had a good visit. That incident was one of the highlights of our Havana visit.

The Ringling circus was showing in Havana, but a long distance from the center of town, in a new and marvelous building owned by the city and known as Palacio de Los Deportes.

It was an elegant building, modern in every way. It was the first time Ringlings had showed in Havana and the Sanger Circus down town was very strong opposition and it had the better of the business as its tent was packed at every performance, whereas with Ringling way out in the new building, only very small crowds were attracted, however, the Ringling Circus had carpets on the floor and steps all over the building, their band displayed on highly colored divans and every employee, even the most humble of property men, was nicely uniformed.

In all these respects the Spanish Circus was very crude. We were cordially treated by the Ringlings and were their guests and had the best of box seats to view their wonderful program.

They did not bring their entire show to Havana and did not bring their menagerie. Only ten elephants were with them here.

They had their regular band, two dozen men and the same equestrian director.

One of their officers inquired what we did with our taxi driver.

We explained he was waiting outside for us until the show was over.

They said bring him in and let him see the show. He was just an ordinary looking sloppy sort of a man, but had been good driver. He came in and sat with us all evening with his mouth wide open. He had never seen such a show before.

This man, the most noted clown the Ringlings ever had, the man who had made the cities of the states ring with laughter from New York to San Francisco, had met his Waterloo.

For the first time in his experience, the Cuban public did not see him. Although he had his usual props, which consisted of a loaf of bread or a cabbage head, and was in his favorite hobo make up, the Cubans did not see him--they did not even know he was there.

After strolling about puzzled for many minutes and really stunned he finally came and sat all afternoon with us in our box. Being old friends, we had no trouble passing the time recalling past experiences.

BACK ISSUES OF BANDWAGON

1966-Jan.-Feb.

1967-Nov.-Dec.

1968-All but Jan.-Feb.

1969-July-Aug., Sept.-Oct.

1970-All but July-Aug., Sept.-Oct.

1971-All but Mar.-Ap., May-June.

1972-All available.

1973-All but Nov.-Dec.

1974-All but Mar.-Ap., May-June.

1975-All available.

1976-All but Jan.-Feb., Nov.-Dec.

1977-All but Mar.-Ap.

1978-All available.

1979-All but Jan.-Feb.

1980-1986-All available.

1987-All but Nov.-Dec.

1988-2003-All available.

In addition to above many other issues are available going back to the 1950s. If you are in need of early issues write to the Editor.

Price is \$4.00 each. Add \$2.00 postage for one issue, \$5.00 for more than one issue. Please select substitutes in case we are out of any of above.

BANDWAGON BACK ISSUES
2515 DORSET RD.
COLUMBUS, OH 43221



Side Lights On The Circus Business

PART THIRTY-THREE

By David W. Watt

Editor's note. The dates listed are the dates the article appeared in the Janesville, Wisconsin Gazette.

January 13, 1917

W. F. Cody, "Buffalo Bill," is no more. The scout, soldier, showman and the ideal man of the youngsters has crossed the divide and is in a new frontier. But his name and deeds will go down in history and last for years after the names of presidents have been forgotten, for there will never be another Buffalo Bill. It was he who did more than any other man to conquer the savage Indians in the early sixties. He was a close friend of General Phil Sheridan and visited the general and his family often when they made their home in Chicago. Col. Cody was always loyal to his friends and nothing he enjoyed better than to have a chat with one over the old days. Possibly few people of today knew him better than the writer, for my acquaintance dates back into the seventies, and in '87 we traveled together.

I was one of the last to have a long visit with Col. Cody in Chicago at the La Salle Hotel where he always made his home when in the city, and this was six weeks ago last Thursday. It was one of the worst storms that I have ever seen in Chicago--raining, snowing and wind blowing all day.

Colonel Cody did not leave the La Salle Hotel until evening. When he heard that I was in town, he telephoned over to the Showmen's League headquarters and told the boys there to tell me to be sure and stop to see him on my way to the train as he heard I was

going home that evening. I started for my train an hour or more before time and stopped at the hotel to have a visit with him, but I had not been there long until people commenced to gather and inquire for him--men in all stations of life--and soon I got a bit nervous and told the colonel I thought we had better cut our visit short as there were many people waiting to see him. He said: "Never mind, Dave. I sent for you and it affords me more pleasure to go back and visit over the old days than it is to talk to men that simply want to see me, many of them through curiosity, and many of them want to see me more than I them."

The colonel has always been democratic in his make up, and if there was anyone that had always been

William Frederic Cody, Buffalo Bill.



loyal to his old friends and associates, it was Colonel Cody. When he was on the frontier in the 60's directing the movements of his men while fighting the savages, he was relentless while in battle against them, but in later years through the many kindnesses shown them, he was considered by many as their godfather, and it is safe to say that today there is many an Indian in the far west sitting in their teepees and drying their tears as they hear the news of the death of their one best friend.

For years back when at the head of his own great wild west show when he would drive onto the lot in the morning, the Indians would salute him and in one voice yell: "Ho, chief."

Long before the Sidelights reach you many of you will have read much of this life history of the great scout

so that perhaps the best I can give you will be a few actual incidents that happened during his life in the show business.

It was in 1887 while showing in Madison Square Garden, New York, that "Buffalo Bill" wined and dined a party of old friends at the famous Delmonico restaurant. The next day the small man with an excited French accent brought the bill around to the office and demanded payment. Mr. Forepaugh was playing "Buffalo Bill" as his one big attraction and his salary, which was a big one, and also a percentage of the receipts was paid in cash, and he settled his own bills. This I tried to explain to the Frenchman, but he became so excited, and holding the bill up high in his left hand, he

pointed with his first finger of the right to the name of "Buffalo Bill" and his O. K. of the bill which, at that time, went farther and meant more to the Frenchman than anybody's signature would in the world. I again tried to explain to him that his bill was unquestionably all right and would be paid, but I had no right to pay it nor funds of "Buffalo Bill's" to pay it with. The Frenchman then told me in an excited, loud tone that he would report me to his superior and also to "Buffalo Bill" and would have me discharged. Later the Frenchman found out his mistake and took his bill to the proper place where it was immediately paid.

It was later in the same spring that "Buffalo Bill" took his entire show over to Europe. The boat was to sail from Castle Garden at 10 o'clock in the morning, sometime the latter part of April, the exact date of which I have forgotten. He took some two hundred Indians with him on this trip, but was late in getting away, many of the Indians wandering away from the wharf. Those who had money were soon buying more or less of the wild cow's milk and were hard to find and harder still to handle when they were found. Many of the people of the Barnum and Forepaugh shows were there to see the show leave. We were deputized in squads of ten or a dozen to search through the different saloons and bring the Indians back to the boat. This was done and as fast as they would bring one in, they would shove him down the long gangway into the boat where "Buffalo Bill" obliged the unruly ones to go down in the hole of the boat and stay there until they were good Indians and could be brought back up onto deck. It was near noon before the last Indian was checked in and the boat was ready to sail for the foreign shore. Many of us had to hurry back to Madison Square Garden to our work which was to commence at promptly one o'clock. "Buffalo Bill" and his wild west show remained in foreign countries for some four or five years and came back to this country in time to open in Chicago in 1893 at the World's Fair where his show made history that will long be remembered.

Five years ago next March the Showmen's League of America was



launched on March 15 with Wm. F. Cody as its first president. This was one of the greatest banquets and entertainments ever given in Chicago, and it was given at the La Salle Hotel on the 19th floor. Late in the evening Col. Cody was called upon for a speech. When he stepped on the platform he had by his side an old friend of small stature and not standing more than five feet six inches tall and did not weigh more than 120 pounds. Col. Cody commenced by saying: "Gentlemen, I want to introduce you to an old friend of mine--the bravest that I ever knew. This little man was born and raised in the far west and never saw a large city before. He was constantly by my side for many years when we were fighting the Indians in the West. I brought him on here as my guest and the sights that he will see will be all new to him. It was many a day while in fierce battle with the Indians that some of the boys would get separated from the others and killed, but I could always look to my right and find this little man fighting bravely face to face with the Indians. I can proudly say one thing of him, that in battle no Indian ever saw his back."

It was after the closing of his show this last fall that he stopped over two or three days in Chicago and six weeks ago last Thursday night, he was tendered a banquet by the Showmen's League of America at their club rooms. Later in the evening he gave a short address in which he told them the joy that it brought him in being able to be there

as the honored guest and gave them something of an idea of the bigger and greater show that he expected to start out in the spring of 1917 at which all the members of the Showmen's League would be welcomed without the price, and that the pleasure would be all his.

I could go on for hours and recite instances that happened in the life of this great man, but with the high price of paper, and you know that it costs money to set type, so I will close and at some future time will tell you more incidents and actual happenings.

Col. Cody died in Denver, Colorado at the home of his sister at five minutes past twelve on Wednesday. Only a short time before his death, he called his physician and told him he wanted him to be honest with him and tell him what his chances were for recovery. When his physician, an old friend, told him that the sand was gradually slipping through the hour glass and that his time was short, he immediately commenced to fix up his business matters with as much coolness and deliberation as has characterized this man all through his life. In his newly discovered frontier may he find nothing but peace and happiness is the wish of an old friend.

January 20, 1917

I promised you some two weeks ago to tell you something of the great Outdoor Showmen's banquet held at the Astor Hotel in New York City on Dec. 27. I will first give you a letter written by an old friend of mine with whom I traveled back in the early ages, by the name of E. F. Albee.

"I regret very much that I will be unable to be present at the dinner. I know of nothing that would give me greater pleasure than to go back forty years the fourth of last July when I joined the Barnum show in Lowell, Mass. It doesn't seem so long, but what wonderful changes in circuses and theatricals generally since that time! A great many of the old and worthy pioneers have passed away and their places have been taken by young and energetic showmen who are developing circus business into one of the highest class and most expensive businesslike institu-

tions in the profession of entertainment. I spent twelve years with different circuses--Barnum's, Barnum, Bailey & Hutchinson's, Forepaugh's, Sells, Burr Robbins, Van Amburgh's, Norris, the Great London, Nathan's and June--and I fully believe my success in theatricals since that time is due entirely to the schooling I received during my circus career. From that time on I have been devoting most of my time to vaudeville. The great colleges of the world produce many great scholars, lawyers and professional men of all kinds, but do not produce that great essential to success, the study of human nature, the great education of travel and the fitting out of a man to meet all conditions of life, as does the early training with a circus. Ed Kohl used to say, 'Albee and I didn't go to universities of book learning; we went to the P. T. Barnum College, and I have never regretted it. I look back with pride to that wonderful education and to those I met there--nature's men, broad gauged and broadminded. To those who will assemble there that night I send my deepest respect and my sincerest wishes that your gathering will only be the commencement of a close relationship of all men who cater to the public's amusement, no matter in what field, and that the object of this dinner will be fully attained, and I hereby pledge my support to assist in any action you may take for the security and the betterment of our business, both for the manager and the artist."

They do tell that of the 641 guests who were seated at the table there was one kick registered and that was by Chin Chin, the tiny elephant belonging to Rhoda Royal, who insisted on having a small bottle of beer with her dinner, but when told that it was absolutely impossible, for this was to be a cold water banquet, seemed to make the best of it and the banquet went on. Its all over now, but it will certainly live forever in the annals of outdoor



had double purpose in making the expensive journey to the Empire City. All agreed that the trip was well worth their while, and it is most gratifying to the executive committee which had the ball and banquet in

show history. No one will deny that the Outdoor Showmen of the World's Christmas dinner and ball at the Hotel Astor was the greatest and grandest event of its nature ever staged by showmen and for showmen. It was not only artistically successful, but what is more, it was financially successful. It certainly was grand and glorious. Showmen from all parts of the United States attended. The Showmen's League of America, under the capable guidance of its president, John B. Warren, came on for the banquet fifty-two strong and also brought with them their mascot, Chin Chin, Rhoda Royal's baby elephant. Clarence Wortham went to an expense of over \$2,000 to bring on his entire executive staff from San Antonio, and C. H. Armstrong and Henry B. Auchy brought over forty men from Philadelphia. In addition to these groups, individual showmen of repute and standing came from all nooks and comers. Al G. Barnes crossed the entire continent to come from Venice, Cal.; J. George Loos and wife came from Jacksonville, Fla., as did also old Steve Mills and wife. In all, 641 plates were served at the banquet and practically everyone of this number represented a showman or his wife or lady friend. Incidentally it is noteworthy that Clarence Wortham brought over thirty members of his staff, occupying over two tables including Steve Woods and wife. It is noteworthy that in no time in the past have showmen come so far for a mere banquet and ball.

Al G. Barnes, the west coast showman.

Though no advance information was given, it appears as though they almost sensed that the time for the protective organization was ripe and that they

hand that everybody was pleased and satisfied. In conclusion it is only proper to once more remark that it was a most genuine success in every way. The showmen from all over the country who attended deserve sincerest thanks.

Chairman Frank P. Spellman and the executive committee who staged the event must also be congratulated and the Showmen's League of America is also to be most heartily thanked for the support it so generously provided. It is a compliment to John B. Warren and his hustling band of associates that they should have carried the propaganda into the East and signed up over 150 new members. No matter if you are afflicted with indigestion and you never cared for ponderous after dinner wit and humor, nevertheless those who attended the banquet and ball of the Outdoor Showmen of the World got more than their money's worth by the excellence of the entertainment furnished under the able leadership of Ottokar Bartik of Metropolitan Ballet fame and Henry Meyerhoff. Hats off to them! The collection of artists on the bill comprised some of the best in vaudeville, and just to show that the occasion was full of versatility, all of them were from without the domain of the white world. The fact that they were doing their stunts before the best collection of good fellows in the amusement world gave them additional zest. Helen Goff of the Metropolitan Opera House started the ball rolling when the call came from Toastmaster Spellman to push back from the tables and watch the film. She sang two high-class operatic selections and was rewarded with a hearty round of applause. Then Calemen-tina Heubsch, solo harpist of the Imperial Russian Theatre, gave the high quality of the entertainment another boost of rendering a beautiful harp solo that was entirely in keeping with the occasion. It went over with a bang and was applauded to the echo. Then, by way of variety, Torcom Bezazian sent his excellent baritone voice swelling through the big banquet hall by rendering two excellent solos. Paolo Martucci was then introduced and added further laurels to his reputation as a pianist extraordinary by the artistic way in

which he manipulated the keys of a big concert piano. Carl John, tenor of the Metropolitan Opera House, followed him and his two selections brought down the house. His rendition of Gralser-zaehlum from Lohengrin was a masterpiece and Carl showed by his attitude that he had never enjoyed singing more in his life. The next contribution was from Mlle. Dazie. She was only in view just three minutes and she put every ounce of the strength of her alluring little anatomy into her snap-py and, fast toe dancing. She not only was on her own toes all the time, but had the whole crowd on theirs also and proved that she is a genius in the art. The big smash came when James McIntyre and Tom Heath, assisted by Otto Johnstone, took possession of the boards through the courtesy of the Messrs. Shubert. Their blackface stuff kept the crowd in an uproar and every once in a while they would work in a purely extemporaneous local crack at someone in the crowd that was sidesplitting. Their work corralled the big laugh of the bill and they were given a reception that will long be remembered. The last act was by the Berger Troupe who built pyramids and whirled themselves around the big waxed ballroom with utter abandon. Many times it seemed as if they would but they more than meet with disaster because of the smoothness of the floor, proved able to meet the exigencies of the occasion, and they did themselves proud. Tom Rankin announced each member in his usual debonair manner. That the outdoor amusement men could go outside their own field and obtain a \$10,000 program of features for their dinner is a remarkable tribute to the high esteem in which they are held by the other branches of the amusement world. When it is considered that not a single drop of intoxicating liquor was used during the dinner, it was a further deserving indication of their high ideals and the morale of the outdoor showmen was made manifest.

January 27, 1917

It was back in 1890, which I think was the first year that the great

Ringling show invaded the eastern country. It was along in midsummer when I got a route of the Ringling show and saw that they were billed to show Titusville, Pa. on a Monday and we, the Forepaugh show, were to show in Oil City the same date. I immediately wrote the Ringlings and also "Delavan," boss hostler, that I, with three or four other friends, would drive over and pay them a visit on Sunday. I also notified them not to let anyone know that we were coming and if they ever had their show up in "apple pie order" for inspection, to have it that day. I did not let my friends know who accompanied me that they were expecting us, but I did want the Wisconsin show fit to look at.

We arrived there between ten and eleven o'clock and drove onto the show grounds; which were located on the banks of the river which gave them ample water to wash up all the cages and horses so that they would be at their best. When we walked into the horse stables, all the horses were groomed like race horses, their harnesses all soaped up and hanging behind them. They were bedded down with straw nearly to their knees and then behind them the straw was twisted into ropes and a pathway about three feet wide was swept up clean so that the thousands of visitors that visited the grounds on Sunday could pass through on as clean a walk as they would on a

Frank Spellman's U. S. Motorized Circus trucks.



sidewalk. We spent the day there, and on our return home, young Adam Forepaugh reported to his father that the Ringling show was the best equipped one and the cleanest that he had ever seen. While I cheated a little in not letting my friends know that they expected visitors, no one with the Forepaugh show ever knew it. Young Forepaugh also told his father that that man Delavan was the greatest boss hostler that he had ever seen with any show.

Adam Forepaugh, Jr.

The Showmen's League of America have settled on a date for their banquet and dance which will be held on February 18th in the Gold Room of the Congress Hotel in Chicago at which time they will also give an entertainment securing the best possible talent.

The first big circus is motorized. Frank P. Spellman turned the trick. The biggest motor truck contract ever awarded in this country outside of a war contract was signed yesterday in the offices of the United States Circus Corporation in New York City by President Frank P. Spellman, representing the circus corporation, and the Kelly-Springfield Motor Truck Company of Springfield, Ohio. One hundred three and one-half ton trucks were contracted for with instructions that delivery be made immediately. James L. Geddes, president of the Springfield motor concern, went to New York in person to close the contract. These trucks will each be coupled with trailers and will make the first motor train circus traveling from city to city over the highways exclusively by motor trucks and automobile. Immense labor is therefore done away with and uncertain delays and inconveniences caused by railroads successfully eliminated.

In the *Billboard* last week a photographic

tribute of Buffalo Bill was printed occupying a full page entitled "1848 to 1917," and designed by B. Cider, a man famous in the business for his designs and drawings. In the upper right hand corner are buffaloes and cowboys and near this on the left is a skyscraper building. In the left hand corner is the death angel peering through the clouds and below is Buffalo Bill with his right hand lifted high and with a smile on his face, looking the death angel in the face, while in the lower left corner are the words: "His First Surrender." This certainly indicates the life of the man, for whether it was friends or enemies, he was always face to face with them. On the side is a beautiful tribute written by Louis E. Cooke of Newark, N. J., an old-time friend of Col. Cody's and the man who was probably closer to him during his career in the business than any other one man, for Mr. Cooke had traveled with the Colonel in almost every civilized country in the world. Louis E. Cooke was with him through prosperity and adversity and probably no man knew him better than did Mr. Cooke. In all the years that I was with the Adam Forepaugh show Louis E. Cooke was the general agent ahead so that he and I were closely associated for many years. I doubt if anyone is better equipped to write a life story of Colonel Cody's wonderful experience in the show business than is Louis E. Cooke. Mr. Cooke has retired from the show business after putting in a long and busy life of more than two score years and owns and operates Continental Hotel in Newark, N.J., a distance of less than twelve miles from the courthouse in New York City.

February 3, 1917

It was along early in the spring of '82 which was the first year I was with the Adam Forepaugh show that on a stormy, rainy evening, I heard a young man standing just outside of the ticket wagon as well sheltered as it was possible from the rain. On looking out I saw that it was one of our men, and I said to him, "Young man, you better step up into the tick-

et wagon and keep out of the storm, for you seem to have a bad cough."

When he entered the wagon, I noticed he was one of the elephant men, and I said to him: "How long have you been with the show?" He said this would be his fourth year.

"Did you commence working for young Adam Forepaugh on elephants when you first began work?"

"Yes," he said, "and I only expected to stay one season, for I, at that time, was only a little past seventeen years of age. You know," he said, "my parents lived about nine miles from Allentown, Pa. and they objected strenuously to my going with the circus. But I thought it would be a grand chance for me to see the country, and as I have been used to hard work on the farm, I rather enjoyed it."

When the show closed in the fall, Mr. Forepaugh said if I would stay during the winter that he would give me \$5 a month more salary than I had been getting during the summer, which was much different than what I expected. So I assisted young Forepaugh in his training of the elephants during the winter, and when spring came, they gave me another raise in salary. Although my home is no great distance from Philadelphia, it was two years before I went back home to visit my parents. Every month I sent a little money home to

show, and very seldom smoke, after I had been back to the show a couple of weeks, I received a letter from my sister who had kept her ears open so that she might be able to write me all the news and tell me what the neighbors had to say about a young man that had traveled two years with the circus. She said that Mrs. So and So, one of mother's nearest neighbors, had told another neighbor that while I looked pretty well, she thought my face reddened up a little as though I might have been drinking.

"Another neighbor woman said: 'Yes, he looked pretty well for a man that has traveled with the circus two years, but there is certainly something better that he might have done at home.' My sister then joined in and told them that there had never been a month since I had been with the show that I hadn't sent money home for mother to put in the bank and said: 'If you ladies know of any young man working around here on a salary that has saved more money than Will has, I would like to know who they are. On top of that he went to work with the Forepaugh show for twenty dollars a month to commence with and is now getting \$50 a month and during the summer his expenses are all paid. This certainly looks to me as though Will was making good, and I don't think that any kind of inducement could be given him within reason that would make him come back home.'

"But," said he, this conclusion that mother's old neighbors came to might naturally be expected, for we lived on a farm nine miles, as you might say, from anywhere and seldom that we ever got a chance to see a circus."

This was the first heart to heart talk that I ever had with the young man, but from that time on we became fast friends and both remained there up to the time of Adam Forepaugh's death. I am willing to admit that Will was an exception to the rule, for his parents were what were known at that time as "Pennsylvania Dutch" of the hardy, industrious kind and always figured on having a little more at the end of



Richard Ringling's R. T. Richards Circus.

mother which she cared for, and when I arrived home, I found mother had gotten up a banquet for me and invited in several of the neighbors.

"I have a sister at home some three years younger than myself and she is the one that always answers my letters and gives me all the neighborhood news.

"Although I have never taken a drink since I have been with the

the year than at the commencement. While there were many young men with the show that were industrious and hard workers, there were but few that saved their money as Will did.

After the death of Mr. Forepaugh, Will, like hundreds of others, drifted away and I have never heard from him since, but will venture to say that a young man that started in with as much thrift and industry as he did when only a little past seventeen years of age, is still making good wherever he may be.

This is the time of the year when all the different shows are as busy as they are in the midsummer, building new cages and truck wagons and remodeling the old ones, getting ready for the coming season. While many of them encountered much rain and bad weather early last spring, as a rule, they finished with one of the best season's work that they have ever had.

I heard through a reliable source the first of the week that young Richard Ringling, son of Alf T. Ringling who makes his home in New York City, was going to launch a new show of his own early in the spring. Just where it will be organized or where he will choose to make his winter quarters, I have not heard, but if the present plans are carried out, I will soon have the particulars and give them to you later.

February 10, 1917

Minneapolis, Minn., Feb. 1, 1917
Mr. D. W. Watt, Janesville, Wisc.

Dear Friend:

A few evenings ago I stepped into the Strand Theater to see a much advertised reel of film thrown on the screen. The pictures were very good, but the feature of the evening, so far as I was concerned, was a film about the showmen's convention held in Chicago a few months ago. The late Col. William F. Cody (Buffalo Bill) and yourself, accompanied by a few friends, were shown as you entered the building and later Col. Cody was shown in the receiving line meeting his friends, yourself included. They

all shook hands with a peculiar grip. The hands were elevated to a point about even with the top of the head and oscillated from one side to the other describing an arc about 180 degrees. It was the first time I ever saw this method of greeting and I am curious to know just the name of the salute, if nothing more.

The picture was dramatic in the extreme due to the psychological effect on the audience. Col. Cody had passed over the Great Divide only a few days before and for a moment the crowd was painfully quiet. Then the silence was broken by a thunder of applause given in memory of the deeds of one of the historic figures of the century.

Billy Lorette.

Hoping to hear from you soon and further hoping to meet you when I go home for my vacation, I am yours truly, John Fitzgerald

The above letter is the first intimation I had that I had joined the movies. The picture alluded to be taken in Chicago at the time of the Showmen's League convention and banquet at the La Salle Hotel and was put on the screen on Saturday as part of the entertainment while we were all seated at the banquet. At that time the film was supposed to be for the benefit of the members of the league and was not put on a screen for the public until after the death of Col. Cody, some two months ago. I also have a large picture of the entire party at the banquet which I have had framed and now prize it very highly for the reason that this also will be put into the movies in a short time and given to the public.

At the time the pictures were taken, it was for the amusement and entertainment of the boys at the banquet, and it was the remotest thing from our minds that they were ever to be placed in movies for the entertainment of the public. At the time Col. Cody was president of the Showmen's League, and his sudden taking away and his prominence all

over the world will surely have a tendency to make the films great drawing cards for the houses, which are fortunate enough to secure them. It is safe to say that it was only through Col. Cody that it was possible for the author of *Sidelights on the Circus* to ever be shown on the screen.

Information has been received that C. B. Church, scout and stage driver, who accompanied Col. Cody on some of his perilous trips, died in Brownwood, Tex. a few days after the death of Buffalo Bill. Church was 92 years old and is credited with having been the first man to drive a stagecoach into San Francisco. He is said to have traveled with P. T. Barnum's circus for over a decade as a driver.

It was back in the 80's that a man by the name of George Arlington, who at that time had charge of the privileges with the Barnum show, that he and I became warm friends. About that time his young son, Eddie Arlington, was wearing knee breeches and when the show was in Madison Square Garden, Eddie was often seen around the attraction. Eddie Arlington could scarcely have been out of his teens when he joined the Barnum show as one of the business staff. For many years before the death of James A. Bailey, he was one of Mr. Bailey's closest advisers and confidential employees. During all the years that the great Barnum show toured Europe Eddie Arlington was one of the advance agents. After Mr. Bailey's death Mr. Arlington then became general advance agent of the Buffalo Bill and 101 Ranch show. On the retirement of the Miller Bros., proprietors of the 101 Ranch show, Mr. Arlington purchased the show and will start out bigger and better than ever the coming spring.

The following letter will give you an idea of the way Mr. Arlington will put it on the road the coming season: "The policy inaugurated by Edward Arlington with the 101 Ranch Wild West show several years ago of engaging the business staff and bosses for a term of years is now being extended to the performers of the new Arlington aggregation. A number of the well-known riders, ropers and other Wild West people have been signed for a period covering several seasons. The latest prominent performer to sign a three-year con-



tract with Manager Arlington is the popular arenic clown, Lorette, whose comedy with 'Bobbie,' the clown donkey, has furnished unlimited merriment to the big shows patrons for several seasons past.

"When the European 101 Ranch show opened the London season in the spring of 1914 Lorette was the principal clown with the show, and the little fun maker with his laugh-creating donkey made such a pronounced hit that the usually conservative English newspapers and weekly periodicals devoted columns to descriptions of the unique comedy of the pair. On one occasion when Dowager Queen Alexandria and Czarina of Russia were present, Lorette was commanded to appear before the royal box and was personally commended by the queen mother. Lorette is said to receive the largest salary ever paid to a comedian with a Wild West show.

"Bobbie," Lorette's partner, is having a unique experience this winter. The donkey which Otis Skinner utilized in his new play, 'Mister Antonio,' was injured while the attraction was in Norfolk and the management was in a quandary to replace the animal actor. In this predicament an appeal was made to Boniface Charles Consalvo of the Hotel Monticello, who was responsible for having the Buffalo Bill 101 Ranch show winter in Norfolk. Through him an arrangement was made with Lorette and the Wild West management for the 'loan' of 'Bobbie' for a few weeks, and the clever clown donkey is now having his first experience in the legitimate."

Mr. and Mrs. Fred Collier of this city have signed with 101 Ranch for the coming season. They will manage a troupe of high school horses and midget elephants from the training stables of the famous Rhoda Royal.

February 17, 1917

Word was received a short time ago of the death of George F. Holland which occurred at his home in Biloxi, Miss. George Holland had been a famous circus rider for many years and had traveled with all the big shows for more than forty years. The family home of the Hollands was at Delavan, Wis. where for something like forty years they could be found

winters at their training barns breaking new horses for the ring and making ready for the coming year. He was the father of George Holland who appeared here last summer with his wife at the Janesville fair. Many an old timer in the business will hear with regret of the passing of George Holland, for he was one of the highest class men in the business both professionally and socially.

Mr. Holland died after a short illness on January 27 at the age of 67 years. He came from a distinguished family of circus folk, having entered the profession at the age of three years. He appeared with all the best-tented organizations of this country. His last regular circus engagement was with the Sells-Floto show. During the last three seasons he had his own Society and Circus Hippodrome with the Tom Allen and C. A. Wortham show. He is survived by the widow and ten children, including George, Jr.

Interment was made at Biloxi and was attended by a big concourse of show people from all parts of the country. Numerous telegrams of condolence and floral tributes were received from friends who were unable to attend.

Mr. and Mrs. Holland had many friends in Janesville, including Dr. and Mrs. Will Palmer who had visited them at different times at their beautiful winter home in Biloxi. I know of no one who will be missed more in his old home at Delavan, Wis. than George F. Holland.

I will give you something of an idea of the part the great trained animals in the different circuses are taking in the moving picture business. One of the film companies of the west will soon be showing burros and donkeys climbing 100 feet high carrying heavy loads over narrow pathways up the mountains; elephants doing all kinds of stunts and a cage of trained lions with the trainers in the cage putting them through their different stunts. The manager of the

film company had some trouble to get a trainer who also must be something of an actor and advertised in the papers for a man to fill the position. Several lion trainers applied for the position, but when they found out they had to go in and handle the lions, they simply shook their heads and walked away. Finally one day an old tragedian, down and out in the business for some time, applied for the position and the manager started in to explain to him that there was no danger whatever, that the lions were well fed and that he would be taking

no more chances than there would be in any other business. At this point the old tragedian stopped him and said: "You need go no farther; I came here to take the position and I am ready to go to work at any time. I don't think you have any lions that are hungrier than I am, and I am ready to go to work any minute." Although a new line of work for the old actor, he made a success of it and is still in the business and says it was a lucky day for him when he got into the movies.

George Holland, Jr.

In 1893 the Barnum show opened on the lakefront in Chicago and for a day I was the guest of James A. Bailey. As I was acquainted with many of the people connected with the show, I spent one of the most pleasant days of my life there. Just after the afternoon performance was over, Billy Burke, the clown, came out to the ticket wagon where I was visiting with Merritt Young, who was filling the same position with the Barnum show that I had filled with the Adam Forepaugh show. Merritt Young sold all the tickets, paid the bills, paid the people and was one of the highest-class men in the business. Billy Burke came out and asked him for a loan of twenty-five dollars until payday. He said: "You know, Merritt, Chicago, especially World's Fair year, is an expensive place to



live."

Merritt never looked up, but simply shook his head and said, "Nothing doing, Billy, until payday."

Burke took a look at him and said: "Merritt, you are in the wrong place with the circus. You have no business to be in the ticket wagon where you are expected to accommodate people occasionally. You should be a door tender over at the main entrance. For there never would be a man or woman that would have the nerve to take a child that was overage and try to get by that frozen face of yours."

This brought a faint smile to Merritt's face and Burke walked away muttering to himself that the ticket wagon of the Barnum show was the chilliest place in the whole aggregation.

With the Adam Forepaugh show in the middle 80's we showed on the lakefront in Chicago for two weeks and on the opening day all the main offices of the big railroads centers in Chicago sent messengers over to the ticket wagon asking for complimentary tickets ranging from a dozen to fifty for the accommodation, as they said, of their office forces.

This we always expected in a big city and I complied with the requests and in an envelope with the tickets I sent a note explaining that if later during our engagement they desired more tickets to send for them and we would be glad to furnish them. One road in particular had seventy-five tickets during our two weeks' engagement, which called for the best seats obtainable worth \$1.50 each, and we were turning away people at every performance.

In the spring when I got ready to go on to Philadelphia to the show, I called in to see the manager of the office whose company had seventy-five tickets for the performances the summer before to see if I could not get a cheap rate to Philadelphia, but he simply shook his head and said: "It will be impossible for us to do anything but when you get ready to go East I will be glad to send you over the road." I bowed myself out of the place and went to the office of another road whose employees had only secured one-third the amount of tickets of the one above spoken of and there I was given a warm welcome by the manager in his private

office who was only too glad to comply with my request and I was presented with a pass to Philadelphia which the manager told me he was much pleased to do.

In the fall when the show closed, this road through my influence got more than \$5,000 worth of business in routing people over the road including fifty-six Indians who were sent from Richmond, Va. to their reservation in the far west. So there are times in a man's business career that it pays to be a good fellow.

Adam Forepaugh.

On Tuesday evening next, Feb. 20, the third annual ball and banquet of the Show-men's League of America will be given in the Gold Room of the Congress Hotel, Chicago. The reception will take place at 6:30 p.m. and the banquet will be served at 7. The entertainment will then be commenced which will consist of whistling girls, toe dancers and grand opera singers. Circus acts of all kinds will be barred. At one o'clock the million-dollar jewel bedecked grand march will start and dancing will probably last until the wee hours of the morning. Music will be furnished by two famous Chicago orchestras. Don't you think this will be worth looking at, even if you have to crawl under the canvas. Next Saturday night's *Gazette* will give you a detailed account of the greatest banquet and ball ever given in Chicago.

February 24, 1917

On Tuesday last I hiked to Chicago to attend the third annual banquet of the Showmen's League of America. This banquet was given in the Gold Room of the famous Congress Hotel, which is located on the corner of Michigan Avenue and Congress Street. The reception was given at six-thirty and the banquet was to be called at seven o'clock sharp.

Everything on the main floor of the banquet hall was ready on the

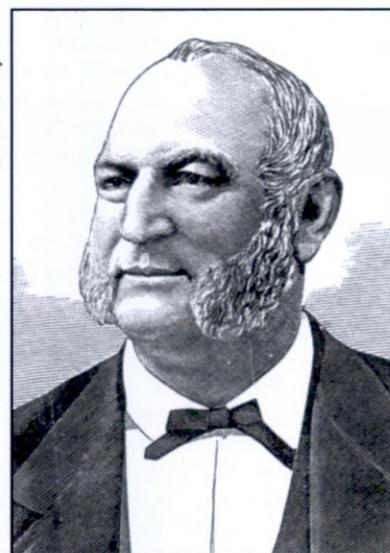
minute for all those who had sent in their tickets and reserved seats in advance, but when seven o'clock came there were more than 200 people who were standing in line in the great halls waiting to buy tickets.

Some of these people had come from a distance and the trains were late. Others were from the suburbs and others belonged in the city of Chicago, but had made no reservations.

The banquet committee of the Showmen's League soon met the hotel management and in less than thirty minutes tables were ready in the large balcony and boxes which surround the great banquet hall, and at exactly seven-thirty everything was in readiness and Johnny Hand's famous orchestra of forty-two pieces played a march. The great door leading into the banquet hall were thrown open and in less than ten minutes everybody was seated at the tables to which they were assigned. It certainly made a countryman like myself open my eyes and wonder how it could be done and who inaugurated the system. Everything went like clockwork and at the sound of a whistle, hundreds of waiters marched in with a military step, or at least it seemed so, and the third banquet of the Showmen's League of America was on.

After the great banquet was over, you could hear compliments on every side for the banquet committee of the Showmen's League and also for the management of the hotel. At about nine o'clock the banquet was over, but everyone kept their seats at their respective tables, and then the entertainment commenced which lasted until 11:30.

The main speaker of the evening was Judge Goodnow of the municipal court of Chicago. In opening his talk, the judge said that ever since he had been invited to talk at the Showmen's League banquet, he had



been at something of a loss to know just what to talk about, and he said to his good wife at the breakfast table that morning: "Mother, I have got to talk at the Showmen's League banquet tonight and what do you think I had better talk about?" He said she immediately looked up with a twinkle in her eye and said, "Judge, I think you better talk about two minutes," and he said, "Ladies and gentlemen, if I encroach upon your time longer than that, I will find no fault if you ring down the curtain on me. But, he said, "as near as I can learn, there are but few people in the country that have done more to build up the high standard of their business than the showmen have. For I have evidence that more than forty years ago there was a little cheating going on around the average circus.

"When I was a boy, some nine or ten years old, we lived in a small town. A circus came along and as our family means were limited, there didn't seem any money on hand for a boy like me to spend for a ticket to the circus. I finally figured out a way to get to the circus and that was by picking up the old job which at that time was always assigned to some boy without money, and that was to carry water to the elephants. I was not long in making arrangements with the elephant man and I was soon busy with a pail carrying water to quench the thirst of what I supposed was the only elephant around the show. This I kept up until--well, I don't know exactly--but I surely had carried more than forty pails of water and was well tired out with the perspiration running down my face.

"I finally dared to turn to the elephant man who was nearby and say to him: 'I certainly never supposed an elephant could drink half so much water.' Taking a look at the old keeper of the elephant, I saw a smile on his face. When I turned around and took a good survey of the elephant, I found they had switched elephants on me, that they had two with the show, and the old caretaker smiled and said: 'Young man, you have done well. You come around this evening and you and I will take in the show together. This I did and stayed all through the show. The caretaker of the elephants said to me, 'Young man, you have worked so faithfully,

you and I will go downtown to the restaurant and have a little lunch together.'

"While I was only in the business for a day, it was for months after that if anybody, especially the boys from the town, wanted to know anything about a circus or, more especially, elephants, I was considered authority."

Judge Goodnow is an easy talker and I don't think I ever heard a speaker that got closer to his audience and held them there than he did on Tuesday evening, and it was with regret when he bowed himself off to make room for the entertainers.

Al Jolson of the Robinson Crusoe, Jr. Company, who was on the bill for "just a song or two," made one of the hits of the evening and is one of the highest-class entertainers now playing in Chicago.

John Philip Sousa, leader of the famous Sousa Band of New York, was another one of the entertainers who called the house down and was given encore after encore.

A concert by the "Hungry Four" was certainly one of the delights of the evening, but there were but few encores responded to for the reason that these great entertainers were engaged, some of them to appear at four or five entertainments the same evening.

There were many other entertainers of the highest order, but it is impossible for me to mention them all. It is fair to say, however, that the banquet and entertainment of the Showmen's League of America held on Tuesday evening, February 20th, in the Gold Room of the Congress Hotel, will be one of the brightest spots in the lives of more than seven hundred people who gathered there at the festive board, for it was there that the good fellows and their wives and sweethearts, where the north met the south, and east met the west, and if any of them had any troubles, they left them behind and were all there with their glad clothes and smiles, everyone bent on having a good time. When the entertainment part of the program was closed and Toastmaster Frank L. Albert announced that dancing would now be in order, the John Hand famous orchestra started and the grand march was on.

The dancing was kept up until

later in the night than I had been used to staying out, when I bade my old friends and many new made ones, goodnight. One of the ladies in the company insisted that I should at least have one dance with her when I told her that the last thing my wife said to me when leaving home was: "Now, Dave, when the dancing commences, you had better hike for your room, for I don't think at a great ball like that they would stand for your kind of dancing."

One of the most interesting characters that I met at the banquet was Arthur Kiralfy of New York, whose father for half a century has been the greatest producer of spectacular shows in the world, such as the "Black Crook," and the "Fall of Babylon," and many others that have made him famous all over the world. It was in 1887 that the Adam



John Philip Sousa.

Forepaugh circus showed on Station Island across the bay from New York for four weeks. The Forepaugh show took three days to get onto the island and get ready, and as the show arrived there on Thursday, we did not open until Monday afternoon.

The Saturday evening before, the Kiralfy's opened their great spectacular show, "The Fall of Babylon," as for some years Adam Forepaugh had leased them camels, elephants and cages of animals at different times for such productions at the opening of their show on Saturday night. Adam Forepaugh, his wife and myself were guests of Mr. Kiralfy in

his private box. At that time the man that I visited with at the banquet last Tuesday night was only eight years of age, but remembered it well, and I was one of the men at the banquet that his father was anxious he should meet. But the rush there was so great that our visit was cut too short and I did not meet him again.

Every guest at the banquet was given a small silk flag and at the close of the entertainment everybody rose up and with the band playing "America," everybody joined in and sang with the band and waved their flags.

At the close, the toastmaster paid a beautiful tribute to two of the departed officers, Buffalo Bill, its first president and Warren A. Patrick, its first secretary. Yet even at a great banquet like that, it has its drawbacks which come the next morning after when you return home and have to get up in the morning and make your own toast and coffee, which makes you think the world is not quite right after all.

March 3, 1917

James Robinson, the famous bareback rider, is dead. He died at the home of his brother-in-law, Bud Gorman, at French Lick, Ind. on Wednesday, Feb. 2. Mr. and Mrs. Robinson left their home in Louisville, Ky. a few days before for a few days' visit with Mr. and Mrs. Gorman, Mrs. Robinson and Mrs. Gorman being sisters. While James Robinson was 82 years of age, he was still hale and hearty up to the time he was taken sick suddenly on Monday evening and died the following Wednesday. Mr. Robinson for many years had been the largest salaried man in his line of work, many times filling long engagements at more than \$500 a week. During all this time he had traveled in every civilized country in the world and was the one great feature of the Cooper & Bailey show in the late seventies, which was the first show to make a trip around the world. For a famous man in the business, Mr. Robinson was probably the least known of any of the great performers on account of his natural retiring disposition. I had known him for nearly forty years, and when newspapermen in the cities where shows were

exhibiting would endeavor to get an interview with him, he would invariably send word from his dressing room that he had just gone downtown and would not be back until the performance started in the evening.

Several Janesville people met Mr. and Mrs. Robinson at different times at Delavan Lake where they had a cottage for several years and many people at the lake knew them as Mr. and Mrs. Robinson for weeks and months, but never for a moment did they think he was the famous bareback rider they had many times enjoyed watching ride with the greatest shows in the world.

James Robinson

Mr. Robinson was not a fast friend maker, but it was said of him when he made a friend, he never lost him. He was born in Boston, Mass. and when a mere lad, was adopted by Old Uncle John Robinson, famous circus man of Cincinnati who died a few years ago. He took the name of Robinson and many people all over the country always supposed he was one of Uncle John's sons.

The last time I met him to have a visit with him was at his home in Louisville, and at that time I purchased his old bareback horse for a young lady bareback rider with the Adam Forepaugh show by the name of Josie Ashton. For several years back he and Mrs. Robinson had spent the summers either at Delavan Lake or on the bank of some of the famous fishing lakes in the northern part of the state. Mr. Robinson would often leave the cottage in the morning, take his lunch with him and fish until evening. He often said that he would rather have a good day's fishing than to see the best show in the world.

I once visited Mr. Robinson nearly thirty years ago when I said to him: "Jim, you have one satisfaction that but few performers have had and that is that you have performed

before all the royal families, including kings and queens, in the world." He smiled and replied: "Yes, Dave, and many a nine spot."

Bud Gorman, his brother-in-law, whom he was visiting when he died is also an old circus performer and has been equestrian director of the Hagenbeck-Wallace show for a number of years.

Although Mr. Robinson had lived longer than the allotted time of man, thousands of friends all over the world will learn with regret of his passing away. Although he was not considered a wealthy man, his fortune, which was well invested, was sufficient to allow him and his wife to live in any country which pleased them best. For some years Mr. Robinson was financially interested in a large dry goods house in Louisville, managed by his brother-in-law, whose name I have forgotten.

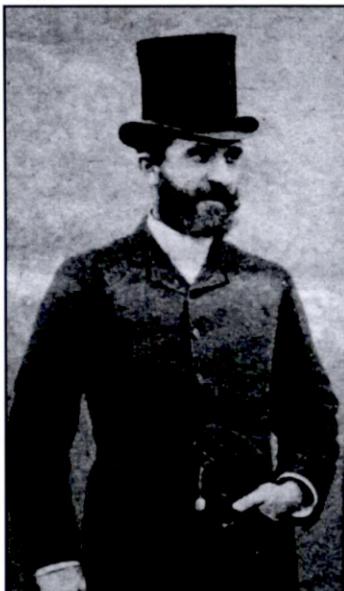
Some two or three years ago a man by the name of Nate Salsbury passed away at the age of about 70 years. Mr. Salsbury was for many years a partner in and manager of the Buffalo Bill show. As I had known Mr. Salsbury and his history from boyhood up, I thought something of the story of his life would be interesting to the readers of the *Gazette*.

Nate Salsbury was born in Freeport, Ill., and when about 12 years of age his father died, leaving the mother and four children. Nate, as he had always been known in the business, was naturally considered a wild sort of a boy at the time, and as the family were poor, Mrs. Salsbury made up her mind she would have to find something for the boy to occupy his time and keep him off the streets. This was some four or five years before the Civil War, and at that time a friend of the family, a wealthy farmer, living about four miles from Freeport, consented to take young Salsbury into his home, telling the youngster's mother he would treat him as one of his own family. When



they spoke to the boy about it, much to their surprise, he was more than willing to go. This man's name was George W. Oyler, and he was considered one of the high class farmers of Stevenson County, Ill. Mr. Oyler had many fine bred cattle on his farm, among them a prize cow that had taken many premiums at different fairs, and of which Mr. Oyler was very proud.

Nate Salsbury



Some four or five years later when young Salsbury was little more than 16 years of age, he told Mr. and Mrs. Oyler one evening that he wanted to enlist and go to the war. This they would not give their consent to and every few days Nate would say to them: "All the boys around here who are my friends have enlisted and gone and I think it is horrid that you will not consent to my going." But Mrs. Oyler begged of him not to think of going. "Why, Nate," she said, "Do you know you are only a little past 16 years?"

It was only a few days later when young Salsbury was missed one morning. He had slipped out of the house during the night, caught a train for Chicago and enlisted and was in the fighting line in the South before the Oylers knew what had become of him. The morning after he had left Mr. Oyler and one of his sons went out in the barnyard to look at the stock, and low and behold, someone had cut the tail off the prize cow. On account of young Salsbury's disappearance, it was naturally laid to him, but they had no proof he was the culprit. In less than a year they received the news that he had been killed in battle. The Oylers and young Nate's mother and brothers supposed the report true and mourned his death for some time. But Nate came out of the war safe and sound and went to New York where he found employment in a theater. It was but a few years before he commenced to come to the front and

possibly twenty years after the close of the war he toured the country with what was known as Salsbury's Troubadours, the stars being Nellie McHenry and himself. They appeared more than once in Janesville in the old Myers Theater and one day when the advance agent had sent the route of the show back to Mr. Salsbury, he found that on the following Monday they were to show at Freeport,

Il. The company arrived at Freeport Sunday forenoon and about 12 o'clock Salsbury hired a horse and buggy and dressed from top to bottom in a white flannel suit, drove to the Oyler residence to surprise the family.

The Oylers had invited a few friends in for Sunday dinner and all were sitting at the table when Nate opened the door with the formality of

rapping and suddenly jumped into the dining room. Lifting his hat he said: "Father and Mother Oyler, I am Nate Salsbury and I did not cut the cow's tail off."

During the twenty years or more, which had elapsed since his departure, neither the Oylers or his own family had heard from him and all supposed he was dead. In the meantime his mother had died, his brothers had gone west and the Oylers were the only ones left that he could turn to.

The reception which was held that afternoon at the Oyler home was one long to be remembered and the best seats in the theater the next evening were occupied by the Oylers and a few friends.

Nate Salsbury was a good businessman, and whether it was with a small show or with the Buffalo Bill aggregation, he could always be found at the front door, looking for every ticket and 60-cent piece that came in. Salsbury was the kind who thought if you wanted to get the money, you must linger around the hive. He died worth more than a million dollars and left many times that many friends.

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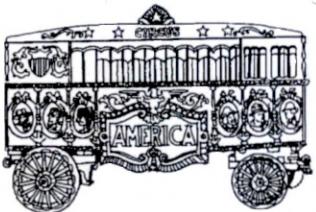
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